

THE CLEANSING POWER OF JESUS - ENCOUNTER SERIES

Good morning Life Fellowship. I am doing okay even though I know my voice doesn't sound like it, because I have a cold for two weeks. I don't know how many of you can identify with it, but my voice is feeling very weak this morning, and I have to preach twice. So you guys are going to get the best of my voice, and I don't know how the second service is going to go. But here is what I want to do first. I want to pray, and if anyone out there wants to pray for my voice this morning that would be wonderful. So let's open our time this morning with a word of prayer.

Jesus, we come before you thanking you for this time we can gather together as your church as we look at the tabernacle this morning. Lord, we just want your heart to shine through your Word. Help our hearts to be open to receive the truth and the grace that you have shown us. God, please help me this morning as I am preaching. I have been coughing for two weeks, so I don't feel the strongest. But God, you are my strength and I just pray that you will guide and direct our time this morning. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Let's turn in our Bibles to Exodus Chapter 30, as that is where we will be this morning. We are continuing our series on the tabernacle. Pastor Dan has done a wonderful job the last two weeks of giving an overview of the tabernacle, as well as talking about the altar of sacrifice. And he told us about the high cost of forgiveness.

During this series we will be going from the outer court to the inner court. As you know from the overview of the tabernacle, there was only one gate to enter into the courtyard and then there was the altar of sacrifice. This morning we are going to talk about the bronze laver and then eventually we will be in the Holy of Holies.

That is the process we will be following as we journey through the tabernacle. And we want to encounter God at every stage in order to understand what God was saying to us. This is not so much about how we have to learn how to encounter God as much as it is about learning how does God encounter us? And we have to always keep that in mind, that it is not working our way into God's favor; it is God showing us the process of how we can understand Him more, and walking in that process of worship that He prepares us for.

Last week Dan showed us the idea of the altar of sacrifice being the shadow and picture of the cross. This week we will get another aspect of the outer courtyard that deals with another shadow of what Christ did for us on the cross. So now let's look at Exodus Chapter 30 beginning in verse 17 and reading through verse 21:

“The Lord said to Moses, ‘You shall also make a basin of bronze, with its stand of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tent of meeting and the altar, and you shall put water in it, with which Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet. When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near

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the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die. It shall be a statue forever to them, even to him and to his offspring throughout their generations.”

This morning we are going to look at the bronze laver, and as we read those verses we understand it was to be used for washing the hands and the feet of the priests. This is significant because the reason that God wanted the bronze laver in the tabernacle was because it is addressing one of the greatest needs and desires of our hearts and our souls. And that is we want to feel clean.

There is something about our hearts and our consciences that when we sin it leaves this film over us. And God knows that the best way we can worship Him and walk with Him is to deal with that. It is an issue of being clean, and here is what I know. We all like being clean. I may like being clean a little bit more than the normal person because I am a germaphobe. Is anyone else here today a germaphobe? Okay, it looks like we are going to need to start a Germaphobe Anonymous Group.

Going through life as a germaphobe you know there are different things you struggle with, right? Like when you are in an airplane, if you bring your own little wipes to wipe down everything in your area, you are a germaphobe. Like when you go to a public restroom, and you are trying to figure out how to get out of there without touching anything, you are a germaphobe. There is nothing like going to a public restroom where they have paper towels, and then beside the door going out there is a wastebasket. That is one of the most beautiful things I have ever seen in my life. Can I get an amen this morning for that. (*Amen.*)

Listen, I love the fact that in most restrooms now you can just put your hands under the faucets and the water comes out, and you can just put your hands under the paper dispenser and out comes a paper towel. What I am waiting for now, and praying that some of you are smart enough to invest in this, we need one of those things that when you wave your hands it will open the door for you. I am waiting for the Kingdom of God to come where I don't have to touch anything in a public restroom.

That is just who I am. I almost lost my salvation one time when I saw one of my three children licking the floor at Walmart. (*Laughter.*) I wasn't sure that I shouldn't just leave him there. I know I am sick, okay? I am a germaphobe and when you are a germaphobe you understand that when you touch things you get a dirty feeling.

We get that from the external things of life, but how much more dealing with the internal soul should we feel dirty? When we sin, when we rebel against God, when we do our own thing, it leaves a residue on our conscience over and over and over again.

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One of the greatest gifts that God has given us is our conscience because it shows us how sin really affects us.

We talk so much about how sin affects other people, and that is good, but this is a human problem that all of us have to deal with. What do we do with our own sin? What do we do with this feeling that something is not right? And the reason why I know this is a human problem, and not just a Christian thing to talk about, I did the research and every major world religion has some kind of ceremonial washing or cleansing. Isn't that interesting? Every single main religion has some kind of ritual where people are supposed to go through this process to wash or cleanse themselves. And what they are doing outside their bodies is to symbolize what is happening to them inside.

And that is exactly what is happening here in Exodus Chapter 30. We see the human longing to feel clean. But here is what I know - only God can make us clean. Only God can produce the cleansing power that we all need and we all desire. So we are going to look at the cleansing power of Jesus this morning. And just like the altar of sacrifice was a foreshadowing of the cross, this bronze laver is a foreshadowing of the work of Christ.

So this morning we are going to be looking at the need for cleansing, the agent for cleansing and then the process of cleansing. So first let's look at the need for cleansing. There is something we have to understand and that is the priests used this laver continuously. It says that that they washed their hands and their feet. Now this was also used as found in Exodus Chapter 29, when a priest was first instituted as a priest of the tabernacle. They would do a full-fledged body wash at that time. There was an initial cleansing, and then there would be the daily cleansings.

The initial cleansing was when they entered into the priesthood, and it was done before they received their outfit, their tunic, their robes and ephod. They would have to go through a ritual cleansing as a symbol that God was cleansing them from their sins. Every single day after that before the priests could offer any sacrifices on the altar they had to cleanse. And then after they offered something on the altar they would have to cleanse again. Before they would enter the tent of meeting they had to wash their hands and their feet.

Why was that? One of the things that we see over and over again in the Old Testament, especially in the Law of Moses, was that everything made us unclean. If you touched a dead body you were unclean. If you ate this you were unclean. If you do this you are unclean. Everything about us makes us unclean. And part of the Law of Moses was to show us as humans so many things that we do make us unclean. So many things that we say, so many things that we think make us unclean.

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So it was a continual reminder that we are sinful, that we are all sinners, and God takes sin seriously. Look what He says in verse 20 and 21 again. ***“When they go into the tent of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn a food offering to the Lord, they shall wash with water, so that they may not die. They shall wash their hands and their feet, so that they may not die.”***

Listen, when God tells them twice to wash so they will not die, it is important. This was a way that God was showing us how seriously He takes sin, and how high His holiness really is. And that is something we don't really like to talk about that much, but God is taking this very seriously. He is telling them that were not to take this haphazardly, and just go blindly through the rituals of offering the sacrifices. They were to cleanse themselves, their hands and their feet, as a symbol of their uncleanness. And if we don't understand that, then we do not understand just how holy He really is.

God is confronting this with a ceremony of washing because we are always inherently unclean. One of my favorite stories in the New Testament is Jesus when He heals one of the lepers. There are a couple of times that He heals lepers. And in the Old Testament we understand that leprosy, or someone with a skin disease, was considered unclean. And if you touched someone with a skin disease you were unclean as well.

So the uncleanness was rampant. Lepers were considered people you could not associate with, and you could not touch. You didn't want to be around them because you didn't want to be infected yourself. But one of my favorite stories is when the leper runs up to Jesus, and he is unclean. Now he knows he is unclean, but he also believes Jesus can make him clean. And you remember what Jesus does? He reaches out and He touches him, a man who has not been touched for probably many years.

Imagine never feeling the touch of anyone, never getting any kind of reception personally or relationally that shows you that you are loved. But Jesus touches this leper and the leper becomes clean. And that shows me that only Jesus is able to touch something unclean and make them clean. That is not us. We get infected by the curse of sin all the time, and it should be a reminder that we are sinners and only God is holy.

I think one of the most common mistakes we make as Christians is we try to lessen the holiness of God. We don't want to talk about what sin is today. We want to lessen the standard of sin and convince ourselves that this is okay because it makes our conscience feel better. Remember I talked about how the conscience feels the dirtiness of sin when we commit it. But many times what we try to do is soothe our conscience by convincing ourselves that it is okay. We will do things, or we will say things to try and manipulate our own feelings in order to justify our behavior so that our conscience can feel better about what we have done.

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That is not what God wants us to do. God wants us to remain as sensitive as we can possibly be by reminding ourselves of how holy He is. God does not lessen His holiness to adapt to us, but the beautiful thing is that He provides us a way for cleansing. Isn't that amazing? The bronze laver was there to show us the provision of God has for us.

You might be sitting here this morning, and I don't know what your relationship with God is like, and I don't know what your relationship with sin is like, but I know that we have a relationship with both of those things. We have a relationship with sin and we have a relationship with God. And if our relationship with sin is defining more of our existence today than our relationship with God, we have a problem. We have a need. But we have a God who has provided us a cleansing power. He offers us the cleansing power of Jesus. It is there, and it is available, but if we think we don't need it we are going to be in trouble.

So the first thing we have to do is identify the need for cleansing. The second cleansing power of Jesus we want to look at is the agent for cleansing. Now we are not going to turn there, but in Exodus Chapter 38 it talks about how they made the bronze laver. The bronze laver was made with the mirrors from the women of Egypt. When the children of Israel left Egypt, they plundered the Egyptians. It was one of the most amazing things ever because the slaves plundered the slave masters. That is where they got all this gold, silver and fine fabrics to make the tabernacle during their exodus.

I saw one of the mirrors like they are referred to in Exodus when I was traveling with my college fine arts trip to Philadelphia. It was an ancient Egyptian display and there were things there from long ago. I saw little makeup kits that the Egyptian women would use, and they actually had these little mirrors in them. But one of the things you have to understand is not every woman had a mirror; it was considered a very special thing. And it was thought to be very prestigious to have a polished brass or bronze item to be used as a personal mirror.

The slave women of Israel asked for some of those items too and they got some mirrors. But God did not give them those mirrors for their own use. Why did He allow them to plunder those mirrors? God knew He wanted them to build a bronze laver so they would need those mirrors made of bronze that they had collected from the Egyptians.

So you have the imagery of the reflection of the bronze on this laver and you have the water for cleansing. There are a couple of things that I think are really interesting about this. First, the provision for this was not from the Israelites. The Israelites did not provide this from their own strength or their own ingenuity. This bronze came as a gift from God to them.



And that is the same thing as the agents of cleansing. The cleansing that God gives to us is not brought about by our cleansing of ourselves. It is God who cleanses us. Just like God provided the means and the materials and the instruments for the children of Israel, He provides us with agents for cleansing today.

We have a dog in our house, and if you have a dog you better have some good stain remover for your carpets, right? I mean that is just part of owning animals or pets, you better have a good stain remover. I made the horrible mistake of telling my daughter if she stopped sucking her thumb I would get her a dog. And within a week she stopped sucking her thumb so we ended up with our rescue dog, named Wesley.

I had purchased the cheapest kind of stain remover out there, and the first time I used it to clean the carpet I realized that the three dollar stain remover wasn't going to be good enough. And here is what I learned - it is not so much about what is cheap it is about what works the best. And if you really care about removing that stain, it will depend on finding the right stain remover.

And we need to understand that it is not by our works that we remove the stain of sin. Just like the Israelites did not provide the water or the bronze mirrors for this laver, we do not provide the instruments for our cleansing today even though many times we are always tempted to clean up our own messes.

There are two cycles I want to share with you this morning that God has taught me over the years. There is a cycle of sin that you and I walk in on a natural basis. Here is what I mean by that. Here comes temptation and then there is sin. We are tempted and then we sin. No matter what the sin is, whether it is public or private, once we sin what

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follows is our emotional state immediately afterwards. I don't care if you have been a Christian for a long time, or maybe you are not even a follower of Jesus, the natural response to our sin and our rebellion to God is guilt and shame. We feel bad about it and we want to cover it up. So we hear the voice of condemnation and we feel guilty and ashamed.

It goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. What did they do next? They covered themselves and they hid from God. And that is what you and I do naturally. That is our disposition. And then after we feel guilt and ashamed we don't want to keep feeling bad so what do we do? We are tempted, we feel guilty and ashamed and our response to that is normally we promise and we try to prove to God that we are worthy of His love.

How many times have you said something like this: *'Hey God, I will never do that again. God, I am really sorry. I am going to prove it to you by volunteering an extra child worker duty at church this Sunday. I will even work with the two years old, God, I am serious. I will walk right into that den and I will serve you.'*

Whenever we sin we feel guilt and shame, but then what we try to do is prove ourselves to God. We want to make this up to Him. *'Because I did this bad thing I am going to make this up to you, God. I am going to do this good thing to counterbalance so you won't be mad at me.'* That is not the gospel and that is not what God wants from your life. And maybe that has been your cycle - tempted, sin, guilt and shame, prove and promise, and you have been living that cycle over and over and over again.

What you will find is you are not being motivated by love. You are not motivated by the cleansing power of Jesus because you love Him so much. I want you to see this in the New Testament. Please turn with me to Titus Chapter 3. I love verses 4 and 5 in Titus because we are tempted to always do this. ***"But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, He saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness."***

We need to underline that. He saved us - why? Not because of anything you and I did. It was not 98 percent by the blood of Jesus and 2 percent because we are such nice people. No, it is 100 percent by the blood of Jesus. ***"Not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to His own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit."*** There you have the initial cleansing that we see in the bronze laver, that initial cleansing of washing completely, and then there is that renewal of daily washing our hands and feet by the Holy Spirit.

Just like the agent of the Old Testament tabernacle was the bronze and the water, the Holy Spirit is our agent today. It is the Holy Spirit that washes us and cleanses us. Listen to what it says in verse 6. ***"Whom He poured out on us richly through Jesus"***

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Christ our Savior, so that being justified by His grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” It is not you that cleanses you, you can’t come to church enough, you can’t volunteer enough, and you can’t prove to God enough. You could go on a mission field to Africa to the head hunters and it wouldn’t be enough. God is not impressed with our works.

You cannot erase what you have done in your sin. And if we try to prove and promise to God, and we try to clean up what we have done, we are mocking the blood of Jesus Christ. We mock what the blood of Jesus stands for, and we mock what the blood of Jesus does for us. You cannot lessen the work of the blood of Jesus to cleanse you from your sins. You just can’t do it. We have to understand that we are helpless to wash ourselves and we need the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus to wash us through the Holy Spirit.

Next we need to see His work. In Ephesians Chapter 5 and verse 25 we read this: *“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word.”* The Word of God is a washing and cleansing tool that He gives to us. I love the picture of this between the water and the bronze because both of these things were reflective. The bronze laver was made out of mirrors, and that means when they walked up to it what they saw was either the blood on themselves after sacrificing, or how they looked after the washing and cleansing in the laver.

James Chapter 1 and verses 22 and 23 says this about the Word of God: *“For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like.”* The Word of God is our mirror where we see ourselves. We see our sins and we see who we really are. The bronze laver was there to constantly remind them of who they really were and who they really needed.

So we have the need for cleansing and we have the agents for cleansing which is the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. Then we have the process of cleansing. Again we saw this in Titus Chapter 3 in how we are saved. It is not by works, it is by faith. And so the first process we have to understand is that we will never experience the cleansing power of Jesus unless we put our faith and trust in Him. It is by faith that we discover that His blood has washed us clean.

So there are two things I want us to remember about the bronze laver. There was the initial cleansing that the priests would do before they were to put on the priestly garments, and then there was the daily washing of the hands and the feet. I think this pictures perfectly the process of our salvation. The two words I want to share with you

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this morning are - justification and sanctification. Have you ever heard those words before?

The word justified literally means to be declared righteous. It is that initial statement of being in the proper standing with God. You no longer have to bear the weight of your sin, your guilt, or your shame, because you are declared righteous. Our account balance before salvation would be a minus one hundred with God. Justification does not mean that now we are at zero and you have to prove yourself. No, when justification happens not only does God erase our sin debt but He transfers to us the righteousness of Christ. It is a complete switch and we are now at one hundred. We don't have to work our way up from zero to one hundred. We are transferred to one hundred through the righteousness of Christ.

Stop trying to prove yourself to God. We must understand that the process of cleansing will never happen if you are trying to earn it or work for it. It is accepted and embraced through faith alone. So we have the process of faith that justifies us. And here is the other thing I want you to understand. It is also faith that sanctifies us. Remember that cycle of sin I talked about - temptation, sin, guilt, shame, condemnation, proving and promising to God, and then living that over and over again.

There is a new cycle God wants you to live and experience this morning. And it is the cycle of grace. And many of you may have accepted by faith that Christ can cleanse you from your original sin, but you are still in this rut of saying, '*Hey, I have to prove my worth. I have to clean up my act so that God will love me.*' Do you remember how I talked about how we are not to lessen the holiness of God? The reason why we don't diminish our own sinfulness is because we need to be more in awe of God's holiness. The more we are aware of the depth of our sins, the greater we will see the span of Christ's love for us. And it is by that love that we should be motivated. It is by love that we should walk in our sanctification.

Let's turn to the book of Hebrews Chapter 10 and verse 14, because you need to see this. Now this is a culmination of chapters 8, 9 and 10 and how Christ is the fulfilment of the tabernacle, the sacrifices, and of the high priest. "***For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.***" He is saying it took only one sacrifice, the sacrifice of Jesus. That all the Old Testament symbols - the tabernacle, the temple, and the system was accomplished fully by Christ.

Now I want you to see how fully Christ accomplishes this. Let's read again in Hebrews Chapter 10 and beginning with verse 19. "***Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full***

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assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”

It is right there. It is the bronze laver. Do you see what this means? It means that not only do we understand that by faith we are justified, it is by faith that we are sanctified, because when you are tempted and you sin, your natural response is either going to be of the flesh or of the Spirit. And then God reminds us is that the moment we sin is the moment we should have the confidence, the confidence of a child to walk into the presence of God and say, *‘God, this is who I am, and this is who you are, and this is what you have done for me. I am under your blood. I am under your authority. I am under your power. I am under the cleansing blood of Christ. I do not have to feel shame or cower or hide. I don’t have to pretend to be someone that I am not. In the fullness of my weakness, in the fullness of my sin, I boldly approach the throne of Jesus Christ.’*

We don’t run and hide any more. We don’t have to be weighed down by shame and guilt. We are to be reminded by our faith to believe that what Christ has done for us is not just our justification but is also our sanctification. We can go boldly into the throne of grace because He loves us so much. The process of grace is that we are tempted, we sin, but we remind ourselves and we rest in the powerful blood of Jesus Christ. We know who we are. Our identity in Christ does not change because of our sins.

And because of that, through that, we can confess. We can confess. Look what it says in Hebrews Chapter 10 and verse 23: ***“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”*** It is He who is faithful to us. It is not you who has to be faithful to Him. It is not you that has to go through the motions to make sure that you are cleaned up before you come to church; it is the cleansing power of Jesus Christ. And what God wants us to understand is that we can boldly approach Him, and we can also boldly confess who we are and what we have done.

I love what I John Chapter 1 and verse 9 says, and you are probably familiar with it as well. ***“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*** There is something about the power of confession that cleanses our conscience. And if you are sitting here this morning and you are hiding, if you are cowering, if you are not honest and authentic with your family, with your spouse, or with God, you will never be able to understand and experience the cleansing power of Jesus.

I want to give you a couple of questions to consider as we wrap up. Number one - have you received the cleansing work of Christ? Remember I talked about justification and sanctification. Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Jesus. Justification is when we are declared righteous and sanctification is a process. I don’t

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know everyone in this room but I do know that if you have never received the initial cleansing power of Jesus it is available for you this morning.

It is not about cleaning up your act before you receive it. It is about coming to Him in the full understanding of your need, and of the filth and depth of sin that has weighed you down and kept your soul in bondage. Don't reject the provision of Christ's blood that is available to you this morning.

The second question is this - are you walking in the cycle of sin or the cycle of grace? Remember those two cycles I talked about. Are you walking in shame and guilt this morning trying to prove and promise to God? Every Sunday do you promise yourself you are going to do better this week? Or are you walking the cycle of grace which is walking in the identity of Christ and having the boldness to approach the throne of God and confessing who you really are. Confess those sins in community to those who know you and to those who love you. We need to be a known people who doesn't hide anything.

The third question is this - what sin has power over your life that God would want you to confess? Listen, I stand before you this morning, not as a pastor, but as a fellow sinner who has experienced this. I can say without a doubt there is no greater joy, and no greater love to experience than to walk in the honesty and the openness of a life that is free. It doesn't mean that we live sinless; it means that we are known.

And the reason why we take this seriously is because there are people out there who do not believe. There are people that we may live with, people that are our neighbors, people that you may go to school with, it is the 200,000 people around Lake Norman who are unbelievers. And every man, woman and child across this region is looking for something that sets them free from the bondage of sin. They are looking for the cleansing power of Jesus. And if you can't testify to that power, you are missing something. The mission of God is too important for us to play with our sin. And may God do a work in us that we are not hiding anything, not running from everything, not trying to prove ourselves to God, but we are fully embracing the love of Christ. And the reason we can walk with boldness into His presence is because we fully believe in His love that is available to all. Will you respond this morning?

We are going to have a time of response and there will be counsellors down here to pray with you. If you need to talk to someone about that initial cleansing please come down here and talk with someone. There are counsellors down here if you just need prayer, personal prayer in your life. There are stations around the room if you wish to partake in the Lord's Supper. And the reason we can celebrate and partake of the Lord's Supper is because of what it has done for us. It is a time of celebration and remembrance of His goodness to us. Maybe you want to go and pray at the cross and just have a time

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of gratitude and thankfulness with Him. Whatever God is calling you to do this morning, let's respond by the power of His Spirit. Let's pray.

Jesus, we need you. We need your cleansing power. You have provided for us the fullness of your love and the cleansing power that was symbolized in that bronze laver in the tabernacle. It has been fully realized through Jesus. God, may we not walk away from it this morning, but may we plunge deeper into it. God, may your Spirit right now be working in us to respond in a way with grace and not works. We love you, God, and we are thankful that you sent your Son Jesus to shed His blood and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. We pray these things in your name. Amen.

The preceding transcript was completed using raw audio recordings. As much as possible, it includes the actual words of the message with minor grammatical changes and editorial clarifications to provide context. Hebrew and Greek words are spelled using Google Translator and the actual spelling may be different in some cases.