

**NOTES**  
**ON**  
**THE BOOK OF NUMBERS**

by

Charles H. MacIntosh

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*"Things new and old."*

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**Numbers 19**

One of the most important sections of the book of Numbers now lies open before us, presenting for our consideration the deeply interesting and instructive ordinance of "**the red Heifer.**"

A thoughtful student of Scripture would naturally feel disposed to inquire why it is that we get this type in Numbers and not in Leviticus.

In the first seven chapters of the latter book, we have a very elaborate statement of the doctrine of sacrifice; and yet we have no allusion whatever to the red heifer. Why is this? What are we to learn from the fact that this beautiful ordinance is presented in the Book of Numbers and nowhere else? We believe it furnishes another striking illustration of the distinctive character of Our book. The red heifer is, pre-eminently, a wilderness type. It was GOD's provision for defilements by the way, and it prefigures the death of CHRIST as a purification for sin, to meet our need in passing through a defiling world, home to our eternal rest above. It is a most instructive figure, and unfolds most precious and needed truth.

May the Holy Ghost, who has penned the record, be graciously pleased to expound and apply it to our souls!

**"And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, Saying, This is the ordinance of the law which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke"**

(Verses 1, 2).

When, with the eye of Faith, we gaze upon the Lord JESUS, we not only see Him to be the spotless One, in His own holy Person, but also One who never bore the yoke of sin. The Holy Ghost is ever the jealous guardian of the person of CHRIST, and He delights to present Him to the soul in all His excellency and preciousness. Hence it is that every type and every shadow, designed to set Him forth, exhibits the same careful guardianship.

Thus, in the red heifer, we are taught that, not only was our blessed Saviour, as to His human nature, intrinsically and inherently pure and spotless, but that, as to His birth and relationships, He stood perfectly clear from every mark and trace of sin. No yoke of sin ever came upon His sacred neck. When He speaks of "**my yoke**" (Matthew 11:29), it was the yoke of implicit subjection to the Father's will, in all things. This was the only yoke He ever wore; and this yoke was never off, for one moment, during the entire of His spotless and perfect career - from the manger, where He lay a helpless babe, to the Cross, where He expired as a victim.

*But He wore no yoke of sin. Let this be distinctly understood.*

He went to the Cross to expiate our sins, to lay the groundwork of our perfect purification from all sin; but He did this as One who had never, at any time during His blessed life, worn the yoke of sin. He was "**without sin;**" and, as such, was perfectly fitted to do the great and glorious work of expiation. To think of him as bearing the yoke of sin in His life, would be to think of him as unfit to atone for it in His death "**wherein is no blemish, and whereon never came yoke.**"

*It is quite as needful to remember and weigh the force of the word "**whereon,**" as of the word "**wherein.**"*

Both expressions are designed by the Holy Ghost to set forth the perfection of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, who was not only internally spotless, but also externally free from every trace of sin. Neither in His Person, nor yet in His relationships, was He, in anywise, obnoxious to the claims of sin or death. He - adored for ever be His name! - entered into all the reality of our circumstances and condition; but in Him was no sin, and on Him no yoke of sin.

"Touched with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He has felt the same.

"But spotless, undefiled, and pure,  
The great Redeemer stood,  
while Satan's fiery darts He bore,  
And did resist to blood."

**"And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face"** (Verse 3).

The thoughtful reader of Scripture will not pass over any expression, how trivial soever it may

seem to be. Such an one will ever bear in mind that the book which lies open before him is from GOD, and therefore perfect - perfect as a whole - perfect in all its parts. Every little word is pregnant with meaning. Each little point, feature, and circumstance contains some spiritual teaching for the soul. No doubt, infidels and rationalists altogether fail in seizing this weighty fact, and, as a consequence, when they approach the divine volume, they make the saddest havoc. They see flaws where the spiritual student sees only gems. They see incongruities and contradictions where the devout, self distrusting, Spirit-taught disciple beholds divine harmonies and moral glories.

This is only what we might expect; and it is well to remember it now-a-days. "GOD is His own interpreter," in Scripture, as well as in providence; and if we wait on Him, He will assuredly make it plain. But, as in providence,

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,  
and scan His ways in vain,"

so in Scripture, it is sure to err, and scan His lines in vain. And the devout poet might have gone farther; for, most surely, unbelief will not only scan GOD's ways and GOD's Word in vain, but turn both the one and the other into an occasion of making a blasphemous attack upon GOD Himself, upon His nature, and upon His character, as well as upon the revelation which He has been pleased to give us. The infidel would rudely smash the lamp of inspiration, quench its heavenly light, and involve us all in the deep gloom and moral darkness which entrap His own misguided mind.

We have been led into the foregoing train of thought while meditating upon the third verse of our chapter. We are exceedingly desirous to cultivate the habit of profound and careful study of Holy Scripture. It is of immense importance.

To say or to think that there is so much as a single clause, or a single expression, from cover to cover of the inspired volume, unworthy of our prayerful meditation, is to imply that GOD the Holy Ghost has thought it worth His while to write what we do not think it worth our while to study.

- "**All Scripture is given by inspiration of God**" (II Timothy 3:16). This commands our reverence.

- "**Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning**" (Romans 15:4). This awakens our personal interest.

The former of these quotations proves that Scripture comes from GOD; the latter proves that it comes to us. That and this, taken together, bind us to GOD by the divine link of Holy Scripture - a link which the devil, in this our day, is doing his very utmost to snap; and that, too, by means of agents of acknowledged moral worth and intellectual power. The devil does not select an ignorant or immoral man to make his grand and special attacks upon the Bible, for he knows full well that the former could not speak, and the latter would not get a hearing. But he craftily takes up some amiable, benevolent, and popular person - some one of blameless morals - a laborious student, a profound scholar, a deep and original thinker. Thus he throws dust in the eyes of the simple, the unlearned, and the unwary.

Christian reader, we pray you to remember this.

- if we can deepen in your soul the sense of the unspeakable value of your Bible;
- if we can warn you off from the dangerous rocks and quicksands of rationalism and infidelity;
- if we are made the means of establishing and strengthening you in the assurance that when you are hanging over the sacred page of Scripture, you are drinking at a fountain every drop of which has flowed into it from the very bosom of GOD Himself;
- if we can reach all or any of these results, we shall not regret the digression from our chapter, to which we now return.

**"And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face."**

We have, in the priest and the victim, a joint type of the Person of CHRIST. He was, at once, the Victim and the Priest. But He did not enter upon His priestly functions until His work as a victim was accomplished. This will explain the expression in the last clause of the third verse, **"one shall slay her before his face."**

The death of CHRIST was accomplished on earth, and could not, therefore, be represented as the act of priesthood. Heaven, not earth, is the sphere of His priestly service. The apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, expressly declares, as the sum of a most elaborate and amazing piece of argument, that **"we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every High priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law"** (Hebrews 8:1-4).

**- "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption."**

**- "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us"** (Hebrews 9:11, 12, 24).

**- "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God"** (Hebrews 10:12).

From all these passages, taken in connection with Numbers 19:3, we learn two things, namely:

- that the death of CHRIST is not presented as the proper, ordinary act of priesthood; and, further,
- that Heaven, not earth, is the sphere of His priestly ministry.

There is nothing new in these statements; others have advanced them repeatedly; but it is important to notice everything tending to illustrate the divine perfection and precision of Holy Scripture. It is deeply interesting to find a truth, which shines brightly in the pages of the New

Testament, wrapped up in some ordinance or ceremony of Old Testament times. Such discoveries are ever welcome to the intelligent reader of the Word. The truth, no doubt, is the same wherever it is found; but when it bursts upon us, with meridian brightness in the New Testament Scriptures, and is divinely shadowed forth in the Old, we not only have the truth established, but the unity of the volume illustrated and enforced.

*But we must not pass over, unnoticed, the place where the death of the victim was accomplished. "That he may bring her forth without the camp."*

As has already been remarked, the priest and the victim are identified, and form a joint type of CHRIST; but it is added, "**one shall slay her before his face,**" simply because the death of CHRIST could not be represented as the act of priesthood. What marvellous accuracy! And yet it is not marvellous, for what else should we look for in a book every line of which is from GOD Himself? Had it been said, "He shall slay her," then Numbers 19 would be at variance with the Epistle to the Hebrews. But no; the harmonies of the volume shine forth among its brightest glories. May we have grace to discern and appreciate them!

JESUS, then, suffered without the gate. "**Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate**" (Hebrews 13:12). He took the outside place, and His voice falls on the ear from thence. Do we listen to it? Do we understand it? Should we not consider more seriously the place where JESUS died? Are we to rest satisfied with reaping the benefits of CHRIST's death, without seeking fellowship with Him in His rejection? GOD forbid! "**Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.**" \*

\* The camp, in the above passage. refers primarily to Judaism; but it has a very pointed moral application to every system of religion set up by man, and governed by the spirit and principles of this present evil world.

*There is immense power in these words. They should rouse our whole moral being to seek more complete identification with a rejected Saviour.*

- shall we see Him die outside, while we reap the benefits of His death and remain within?
- shall we seek a home, and a place, and a name, and a portion, in that world from which our Lord and Master is an outcast?
- shall we aim at getting on in a world which could not tolerate that blessed One to whom we owe our present and everlasting felicity?
- shall we aspire after honour, position, and wealth, where our Master found only a manger, a cross, a borrowed grave?

May the language of our hearts be, "Far be the thought!" and may the language of our lives be, "Far be the thing!"

May we, by the grace of GOD, yield a more hearty response to the Spirit's call to "**Go forth.**"

Christian reader, let us never forget that, when we look at the death of CHRIST, we see two things, namely:

- the death of a victim, and the death of a martyr
- a victim for sin, a martyr for righteousness
- a victim, under the hand of GOD, a martyr, under the hand of man.

He suffered for sin, that we might never suffer. Blessed be His name for evermore! But then, His martyr sufferings, His sufferings for righteousness under the hand of man, these we may know. **"For unto you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake"** (Philippians 1:29). It is a positive gift to be allowed to suffer with CHRIST. Do we esteem it?

In contemplating the death of CHRIST, as typified by the ordinance of the red heifer, we see not only the complete putting away of sin, but also the judgment of this present evil world: **"He gave himself for our sins that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father"** (Galatians 1:4).

Here the two things are put together by GOD; and, most surely, they should never be separated by us. We have the judgment of sin, root and branch; and the judgment of this world. The former should give perfect repose to the exercised conscience; while the latter should deliver the heart from the ensnaring influence of the world, in all its multiplied forms. That purges the conscience from all sense of guilt; this snaps the link which binds the heart and the world together.

Now, it is most needful for the reader to understand and enter experimentally into the connection existing between these two things. It is quite possible to miss this grand link, even while holding and contending for a vast amount of evangelical truth and it may be confidently affirmed that where this link is missing, there must be a very serious defect in the Christian character.

We frequently meet with earnest souls who have been brought under the convicting and awakening power of the Holy Spirit, But who have not yet known, for the ease of their troubled consciences, the full value of the atoning death of CHRIST, as putting away, for ever, all their sins, and bringing them nigh to GOD, without a stain upon the soul, or a sting in the conscience. If this be the present actual condition of the reader, he would need to consider the first clause of the verse just quoted. **"He gave himself for our sins."**

This is a most blessed statement for a troubled soul. It settles the whole question of sin. If it be true that CHRIST gave Himself for my sins, what remains for me but to rejoice in the precious fact that my sins are all gone!

The One who took my place, who stood charged with my sins, who suffered in my room and stead, is now at the right hand of GOD, crowned with glory and honour. This is enough. My sins are all gone for ever. If they were not, He could not be where He now is. The crown of glory which wreathes His blessed brow is the proof that my sins are perfectly atoned for, and therefore perfect peace is my portion - a peace as perfect as the work of CHRIST can make it.

*But then, let us never forget that the very same work that has for ever put away our sins has delivered us from this present evil world.*

The two things go together. CHRIST has not only delivered me from the consequences of my sins, but also from the present power of sin, and from the claims and influences of that thing which Scripture calls "**the world.**"

All this, however, will come more fully out as we proceed with our chapter.

**"And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with His finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times."**

Here we have the solid groundwork of all real purification. We know that, in the type before us, it is only, as the inspired apostle tells us, a question of "**sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh**" (Hebrews 9:13). But we have to look beyond the type to the antitype - beyond the shadow to the substance.

In the sevenfold sprinkling of the blood of the red heifer, before the tabernacle of the congregation, we have a figure of the perfect presentation of the Blood of CHRIST to GOD, as the only ground of the meeting-place between GOD and the conscience. The number "**seven,**" as has frequently been observed, is expressive of perfection; and, in the figure before us, we see the perfection attaching to the death of CHRIST, as an atonement for sin, presented to, and accepted by GOD. All rests upon this divine ground. The Blood has been shed, and presented to a holy GOD, as a perfect atonement for sin. This, when simply received by faith, must relieve the conscience from all sense of guilt and all fear of condemnation. There is nothing before GOD save the perfection of the atoning work of CHRIST. Sin has been judged and our sins put away. They have been completely obliterated by the precious Blood of CHRIST. To believe this is to enter into perfect repose of conscience.

*And here let the reader carefully note that there is no further allusion to the sprinkling of blood throughout the entire of this singularly interesting chapter.*

This is precisely in keeping with the doctrine of Hebrews 9, 10. It is but another illustration of the divine harmony of the Volume. The sacrifice of CHRIST, being divinely perfect, needs not to be repeated. Its efficacy is divine and eternal.

**"But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the Blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"** (Hebrews 9:11-14).

*Observe the force of these two words, "**once**" and "**eternal.**"*

See how they set forth the completeness and divine efficacy of the sacrifice of CHRIST. The blood was shed once and for ever. To think of a repetition of that great work would be to deny its everlasting and all-sufficient value, and reduce it to the level of the blood of bulls and goats.

But, further,

**"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now, once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself."**

Sin therefore, has been put away. It cannot be put away, and, at the same time, be on the believer's conscience. This is plain. It must either be admitted that the believer's sins are blotted out, and his conscience perfectly purged, or that CHRIST must die over again. But this latter is not only needless, but wholly out of the question; for, as the apostle goes on to say, **"As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment; so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation."**

There is something most marvellous in the patient elaborateness with which the Holy Ghost argues out this entire subject. He expounds, illustrates, and enforces the great doctrine of the completeness of the sacrifice in such a way, as to carry conviction to the soul, and relieve the conscience of its heavy burden. Such is the exceeding grace of GOD that He can not only accomplish the work of eternal redemption for us, but, in the most patient and painstaking manner, has argued and reasoned, and proved the whole point in question, so as not to leave one hair's breadth of ground on which to base an objection.

Let us hearken to His further powerful reasonings, and may the Spirit apply them in power to the heart of the anxious reader.

**"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in these sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."**

*But that which the blood of bulls could never do, the Blood of JESUS has for ever done.*

This makes all the difference. All the blood that ever flowed around Israel's altars - the millions of sacrifices, offered according to the requirements of the Mosaic ritual - could not blot out one stain from the conscience, or justify a sin-hating GOD in receiving a sinner to Himself.

**"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."**

**"Wherefore when he cometh into the world he saith, sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to**

**do thy will, O God . . . By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once."**

Mark the contrast. GOD had no pleasure in the endless round of sacrifices under the law. They did not please Him. They left wholly unaccomplished that which He had in His loving heart to do for His people, namely, to rid them completely of sin's heavy load, and bring them unto Himself, in perfect peace of conscience and liberty of heart.

This, JESUS, by the one offering of His blessed body, did. He did the will of GOD; and, blessed for ever be His name, He has not to do His work over again. We may refuse to believe that the work is done - refuse to commit our souls to its efficacy - to enter into the rest which it is calculated to impart - to enjoy the holy liberty of spirit which it is fitted to yield; but there stands the work in its own imperishable virtue; and there, too, stand the Spirit's arguments respecting that work, in their own unanswerable force and clearness; and neither Satan's dark suggestions, nor our own unbelieving reasonings can ever touch either the one or the other. They may, and alas! they do, most sadly interfere with our soul's enjoyment of the truth; but the truth itself remains ever the same.

**"And every priest standeth daily ministering, and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."**

It is due to the Blood of CHRIST that it should impart eternal perfection; and, we may surely add, it is due to it likewise that our souls should taste that perfection. No one need ever imagine that he is doing honour to the work of CHRIST, or to the Spirit's testimony respecting that work, when he refuses to accept that perfect remission of sins which is proclaimed to him through the Blood of the Cross. It is no sign of true piety, or of pure religion, to deny what the grace of GOD has done for us in CHRIST, and what the record of the eternal Spirit has presented to our souls on the page of inspiration.

Christian reader, anxious inquirer, does it not seem strange that, when the Word of GOD presents to our view CHRIST seated at the right hand of GOD, in virtue of accomplished redemption, we should be, virtually, in no wise better off than those who had merely a human priest standing daily ministering, and offering the same round of sacrifices? We have a divine Priest who has sat down for ever. They had a merely human priest, who could never, in his official capacity, sit down at all; and yet are we, in the state of the mind, in the apprehension of the soul, in the actual condition of the conscience, in no respect better off than they? Can it be possible that, with a perfect work to rest upon, our souls should never know perfect rest?

The Holy Ghost, as we have seen in these various quotations taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, has left nothing unsaid to satisfy our souls as to the question of the complete putting away of sin by the precious Blood of CHRIST. Why then should you not, this moment, enjoy full, settled peace of conscience? Has the Blood of JESUS done nothing more for you than the blood of a bullock did for a Jewish worshipper?

It may be, however, that the reader is ready to say, in reply to all that we have been seeking to urge upon him, "I do not, in the least, doubt the efficacy of the Blood of JESUS. I believe it cleanseth from all sin. I believe, most thoroughly, that all who simply put their trust in that blood are perfectly safe, and will be eternally happy. My difficulty does not lie here at all. What troubles me is, not the efficacy of the blood, in which I fully believe, but my own personal interest in that blood, of which I have no satisfactory evidence. This is the secret of all my trouble. The doctrine of the blood is as clear as a sunbeam; but the question of my interest therein is involved in hopeless obscurity."

Now if this be at all the embodiment of the reader's feelings on this momentous subject, it only proves the necessity of his deeply pondering the fourth verse of the nineteenth of Numbers. There he will see that the true basis of all purification is found in this, that the blood of atonement has been presented to GOD, and accepted by Him.

*This is a most precious truth, but one little understood.*

It is of all importance that the really anxious soul should have a clear view of the subject of atonement. It is so natural to us all to be occupied with our thoughts and feelings about the Blood of CHRIST, rather than with the Blood itself, and with GOD's thoughts respecting it. If the Blood has been perfectly presented to GOD, if He has accepted it, if He has glorified Himself in the putting away of sin, then what remains for the divinely exercised conscience but to find perfect repose in that which has met all the claims of GOD, harmonized His attributes, and laid the foundations of that marvellous platform whereon a sin-hating GOD and a poor sin-destroyed sinner can meet?

Why introduce the question of my interest in the Blood of CHRIST, as though that work were not complete without anything of mine, call it what you will, my interest, my feelings, my experience, my appreciation, my appropriation, my anything? Why not rest in CHRIST alone? This would be really having an interest in Him. But the very moment the heart gets occupied with the question of its own interest - the moment the eye is withdrawn from that divine object which the Word of GOD and the Holy Ghost present - then spiritual darkness and perplexity must ensue; and the soul, instead of rejoicing in the perfection of the work of CHRIST, is tormented by looking at its own poor, imperfect feelings.

"The atoning work is done,  
The Victim's blood is shed;  
And JESUS now is gone,  
His people's cause to plead.

He stands in Heaven their Great High Priest,  
And bears their names upon His breast."

*Here, blessed be GOD, we have the stable groundwork of "purification for sin," and of perfect peace for the conscience.*

The atoning work is done. All is finished. The great antitype of the red heifer has been slain. He gave himself up to death, under the wrath and judgment of a righteous GOD, that all who simply put their trust in Him might know, in the deep secret of their own souls, divine purification and

perfect Peace. We are purified as to the conscience, not by our thoughts about the Blood, but by the Blood itself. We must insist upon this. GOD Himself has made out our title for us, and that title is found in the Blood alone. Oh! that most precious Blood of JESUS that speaks profound peace to every troubled soul that will simply lean upon its eternal efficacy. Why, we may ask, is it that the blessed doctrine of the Blood is so little understood and appreciated? Why will people persist in looking to anything else, or in mingling anything else with it?

May the Holy Ghost lead the anxious reader, as he reads these lines, to stay his heart and conscience upon the atoning sacrifice of the Lamb of GOD.

Having thus endeavoured to present to the reader the precious truth unfolded to us in the death of the red heifer, we shall now ask him to meditate, for a few moments, upon the burning of the heifer. We have looked at the blood, let us now gaze upon the ashes. In the former, we have the sacrificial death of CHRIST, as the only purification for sin. In the latter, we have the remembrance of that death applied to the heart by the Spirit, through the word, in order to remove any defilement contracted in our walk from day to day.

This gives great completeness and beauty to this most interesting type.

GOD has not only made provision for past sins, but also for present defilement, so that we may be ever before him in all the value and merit of the perfect work of CHRIST. He would have us treading the courts of His sanctuary, the holy precincts of His presence, "**Clean every whit.**"

And not only does He Himself see as thus; but, blessed for ever be His name, He would have us thus in our own inward self-consciousness. He would give us, by His Spirit, through the Word, the deep inward sense of cleanness in His sight, so that the current of our communion with Him may flow on without a ripple and without a curve.

**"If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin"** (I John 1).

But if we fail to walk in the light - if we forget, and, in our forgetfulness, touch the unclean thing, how is our communion to be restored? Only by the removal of the defilement. But how is this to be effected? By the application to Our hearts and consciences of the precious truth of the death of CHRIST. The Holy Ghost produces self-judgment, and brings to our remembrance the precious truth that CHRIST suffered death for that defilement which we so lightly and indifferently contract. It is not a fresh sprinkling of the Blood of CHRIST - a thing unknown in Scripture; but the remembrance of His death brought home, in fresh power, to the contrite heart, by the ministry of the Holy Ghost.

**"And one shall burn the heifer in his sight . . . And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer . . . And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin."**

It is the purpose of GOD that His children should be purified from all iniquity, and that they

should walk in separation from this present evil world, where all is death and defilement. This separation is effected by the action of the Word on the heart, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

**"Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father" (Galatians 1:4). And again, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:13, 14).**

It is remarkable how constantly the Spirit of GOD presents, in intimate connection, the full relief of the conscience from all sense of guilt, and the deliverance of the heart from the moral influence of this present evil world. Now, it should be our care, beloved Christian reader, to maintain the integrity of this connection. Of course, it is only by the gracious energy of the Holy Ghost that we can do so; but we ought to seek earnestly to understand and practically carry out the blessed link of connection between the death of CHRIST as an atonement for sin, and as the moral power of separation from this world. Many of the people of GOD never get beyond the former, if they even get that length. Many seem to be quite satisfied with the knowledge of the forgiveness of sins through the atoning work of CHRIST, while, at the same time, they fail to realize deadness to the world in virtue of the death of CHRIST, and their identification with Him therein.

Now, when we stand and gaze upon the burning of the red heifer, in Numbers 19 - when we examine that mystic heap of ashes, what do we find? It may be said, in reply, "We find our sins there." True, thanks be to GOD, and to the Son of His love, we do indeed find our sins, our iniquities, our trespasses, our deep crimson guilt, all reduced to ashes. But is there nothing more? Can we not, by a careful analysis, discover more? Unquestionably. We find nature there, in every stage of its existence - from the highest to the lowest point in its history. Moreover, we find all the glory of this world there. The cedar and the hyssop represent nature in its widest extremes; and, in giving its extremes, they take in all that lies between.

"Solomon spake of trees,  
from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon,  
even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall."

"**Scarlet**" is viewed, by those who have carefully examined Scripture on the point, as the type or expression of human splendour, worldly grandeur, the glory of this world, the glory of man. Hence, therefore, we see in the burning of the heifer, the end of all worldly greatness, human glory, and the complete setting aside of the flesh, with all its belongings. This renders the burning of the heifer deeply significant. It shadows forth a truth too little known, and, when known, too readily forgotten - a truth embodied in these memorable words of the apostle, **"God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, Whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."**

We are all far too prone to accept the Cross as the ground of escape from all the consequences of our sins, and of full acceptance with GOD, and, at the same time, refuse it as the ground of our complete separation from the world. True it is, thanks and praise be to our GOD, the solid

ground of our deliverance from guilt and consequent condemnation; but it is more than this. It has severed us, for ever, from all that pertains to this world, through which we are passing. Are my sins put away Yes; blessed be the GOD of all grace! according to what? According to the perfection of CHRIST's atoning sacrifice as estimated by GOD Himself. Well then, such, precisely, is the measure of our deliverance from this present evil world - from its fashions, its maxims, its habits, its principles.

The believer has absolutely nothing in common with this world, in so far as he enters into the spirit and power of the Cross of the Lord JESUS CHRIST. That Cross has dislodged him from everything here below, and made him a pilgrim and a stranger in this world. The truly devoted heart sees the dark shadow of the Cross looming over all the glitter and glare, the pomp and fashion of this world. Paul saw this, and the sight of it caused him to esteem the world, in its very highest aspect, in its most attractive forms, in its brightest glories, as dross.

Such was the estimate formed of this world by one who had been brought up at the feet of Gamaliel. "**The world is crucified unto me,**" said he, "**and I unto the world.**" Such was Paul, and such should every Christian be - a stranger on earth, a citizen of Heaven, and this, not merely in sentiment or theory, but in downright fact and reality; for, as surely as our deliverance from hell is more than a mere sentiment or theory, so surely is our separation from this present evil age. The one is as positive and as real as the other.

But here let us ask, Why is not this great practical truth more pressed home upon the hearts of evangelical Christians at the present moment? Why are we so slow to urge upon one another the separating power of the Cross of CHRIST? If my heart loves JESUS, I shall not seek a place, a portion, or a name where He found only a malefactor's Cross.

This, dear reader, is the simple way to look at the matter. Do you really love CHRIST? Has your heart been touched and attracted by His wondrous love to you? If so, remember that He was cast out by this world. Yes, JESUS was, and still is, an outcast from this world. There is no change.

The world is the world still; and be it remembered, that one of Satan's special devices is to lead people to accept salvation from CHRIST, while, at the same time, they refuse to be identified with Him in His rejection - to avail themselves of the atoning work of the Cross, while abiding comfortably in the world that is stained with the guilt of nailing CHRIST thereto.

In other words, he leads people to think and to say that the offence of the Cross has ceased; that the world of the nineteenth century is totally different from the world of the first; that if the Lord JESUS were on earth now He would meet with very different treatment from that which He received then; that it is not now a pagan world, but a Christian one, and this makes a material and a fundamental difference; that now it is quite right for a Christian to accept of citizenship in this world, to have a name, a place, and a portion here, seeing it is not the same world at all, as that which nailed the Son of GOD to Calvary's cursed tree.

Now we feel it incumbent on us to press upon all who read these lines that this is, in very deed, a lie of the arch-enemy of souls. The world is not changed. It may have changed its dress, but it has not changed its nature, its spirit, its principles. It hates JESUS as cordially as when the cry went forth, "**Away with him! Crucify him!**" There is really no change.

If only we try the world by the same grand test, we shall find it to be the same evil, God-hating, Christ-rejecting world as ever. And what is that test? CHRIST crucified. May this solemn truth be engraved on our hearts! May we realize and manifest its formative power! May it detach us more completely from all that belongs to the world! May we be enabled to understand more fully the truth presented in the ashes of the red heifer! Then shall our separation from the world, and our dedication to CHRIST, be more intense and real. The Lord, in His exceeding goodness, grant that thus it may be, with all His people, in this day of hollow, worldly, half-and-half profession!

*Let us now consider, for a moment, how the ashes were to be applied.*

**"He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify Himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him."**

It is a solemn thing to have to do with GOD - to walk with Him, from day to day, in the midst of a defiled and defiling scene. He cannot tolerate any uncleanness upon those with whom He deigns to walk, and in whom He dwells. He can pardon and blot out; He can heal, cleanse, and restore; but He cannot sanction unjudged evil, or suffer it upon His people. It would be a denial of His very name and nature were He to do so. This, while deeply solemn, is truly blessed.

It is our joy to have to do with One whose presence demands and secures holiness. We are passing through a world in which we are surrounded with defiling influences. True, defilement is not now contracted by touching "**a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave.**" These things were, as we know, types of things moral and spiritual with which we are in danger of coming in contact every day and every hour. We doubt not but those who have much to do with the things of this world are most painfully sensible of the immense difficulty of escaping with unsoiled hands. Hence the need of holy diligence in all our habits and associations, lest we contract defilement, and interrupt our communion with GOD. He must have us in a condition worthy of Himself. "**Be ye holy, for I am holy.**"

But the anxious reader, whose whole soul breathes after holiness, may eagerly inquire, "What, then, are we to do, if it be true that we are thus surrounded, on all hands, with defiling influences, and if we are so prone to contract that defilement? Furthermore, if it is impossible to have fellowship with GOD, with unclean hands and a condemning conscience, What are we to do?"

First of all, then, we should say, be watchful. Wait much and earnestly on GOD. He is faithful and gracious - a prayer-hearing and a prayer-answering GOD - a liberal and an unupbraiding Giver. "**He giveth more grace.**" This is, positively, a blank check which faith can fill up to any amount. Is it the real purpose of your soul to get on, to advance in the divine life, to grow in personal holiness? Then beware how you continue, for a single hour, in contact with what soils your hands and wounds your conscience, grieves the Holy Ghost, and mars your communion. Be decided. Be whole-hearted. Give up, at once, the unclean thing, whatever it be, habit, or association, or anything else. Cost what it may, give it up. Entail what loss it may, abandon it.

No worldly gain, no earthly advantage, could compensate for the loss of a pure conscience, an uncondemning heart, and the light of your Father's countenance. Are you not convinced of this? If so, seek grace to carry out your conviction.

But it may be further asked, "What is to be done when defilement is actually contracted? How is the defilement to be removed?" Hear the reply in the figurative language of Numbers 19.

**"And for an unclean person, they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel. And a clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave. And the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe Himself in water, and shall be clean at even."**

The reader will remark that, in the twelfth and eighteenth verses, there is a double action set forth. There is the action of the third day, and the action of the seventh day. Both were essentially necessary to remove the ceremonial defilement caused by contact with the varied forms of death above specified.

Now, what did this double action typify? What is it that, in our spiritual history, answers thereto? we believe it to be this. When we, through lack of watchfulness and spiritual energy, touch the unclean thing and get defiled, we may be ignorant of it; but GOD knows all about it. He cares for us, and is looking after us; not, blessed be His name, as an angry judge, or stern censor, but as a loving father, who will never impute anything to us, because it was all, long ago, imputed to the One who died in our stead. But, though He will never impute it to us, He will make us feel it deeply and keenly. He will be a faithful reprover of the unclean thing; and He can reprove all the more powerfully simply because He will never reckon it against us.

The Holy Spirit brings our sin to remembrance, and this causes unutterable anguish of heart. This anguish may continue for some time. It may be moments, days, months, or years. We once met with a young Christian, who was rendered miserable, for three years, by having gone with some worldly friends on an excursion. This convicting operation of the Holy Ghost we believe to be shadowed forth by the action of the third day. He first brings our sin to remembrance; and then He graciously brings to our remembrance, and applies to our souls, through the written word, the value of the death of CHRIST as that which has already met the defilement which we so easily contract. This answers to the action of the seventh day - removes the defilement and restores our communion.

*And, be it carefully remembered, that we can never get rid of defilement in any other way.*

We may seek to forget, to slur over, to heal the wound slightly, to make little of the matter, to let time obliterate it from the tablet of memory. It will never do. Nay, it is most dangerous work. There are few things more disastrous than trifling with conscience or the claims of holiness. And it is as foolish as it is dangerous; for GOD has, in His grace, made full provision for the removal of the uncleanness which His holiness detects and condemns. But the uncleanness must be removed, else communion is impossible. **"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me."**

*The suspension of a believers communion is what answers to the cutting off of a member from the congregation of Israel.*

The Christian can never be cut off from CHRIST; but his communion can be interrupted by a single sinful thought, and that sinful thought must be judged and confessed, and the soil of it removed, ere the communion can be restored. It is well to remember this. It is a serious thing to trifle with sin. We may rest assured we cannot possibly have fellowship with GOD and walk in defilement. To think so, is to blaspheme the very name, the very nature, the very throne and majesty of GOD.

No, dear reader, we must keep a clean conscience, and maintain the holiness of GOD, else we shall, very soon, make shipwreck of faith and break down altogether. May the Lord keep us walking softly and tenderly, watchfully and prayerfully, until we have laid aside our bodies of sin and death, and entered upon that bright and blessed world above, where sin, death, and defilement are unknown.

In studying the ordinances and ceremonies of the Levitical economy, nothing is more striking than the jealous care with which the GOD of Israel watched over His people, in order that they might be preserved from every defiling influence. By day and by night, awake and asleep, at home and abroad, in the bosom of the family and in the solitary walk, His eyes were upon them. He looked after their food, their raiment, their domestic habits and arrangements. He carefully instructed them as to what they might and what they might not eat; what they might and what they might not wear. He even set forth, distinctly His mind as to the very touching and handling of things. In short, He surrounded them with barriers amply sufficient, had they only attended to them, to resist the whole tide of defilement to which they were exposed on every side.

*In all this, we read, in unmistakable characters, the holiness of GOD; but we read also, as distinctly, the grace of GOD.*

If divine holiness could not suffer defilement upon the people, divine grace made ample provision for the removal thereof.

This provision is set forth in our chapter under two forms, namely:

- the blood of atonement, and
- the water of separation.

Precious provision! a provision illustrating, at once, the holiness and the grace of GOD. Did we not know the ample provisions of divine grace, the lofty claims of divine holiness would be perfectly overwhelming; but being assured of the former, we can heartily rejoice in the latter.

Could we desire to see the standard of divine holiness lowered a single hair's breadth? Far be the thought. How could we, or why should we, seeing that divine grace has fully provided what divine holiness demands?

An Israelite of old might shudder as he hearkened to such words as these, "**He that toucheth the**

**dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days,"** and again, **"whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the Lord; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel."** Such words might indeed terrify his heart. He might feel led to exclaim, "What am I to do? How can I ever get on? It seems perfectly impossible for me to escape defilement."

But, then, what of the ashes of the burnt heifer? What of the water of separation? What could these mean? They set forth the memorial of the sacrificial death of CHRIST, applied to the heart by the power of the Spirit of GOD.

**"He shall purify himself with it the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean; but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean."**

If we contract defilement, even though it be through negligence, that defilement must be removed, ere our communion can be restored. But we cannot get rid of the soil by any effort of our own. It can only be by the use of GOD's gracious provision, even the water of purification. An Israelite could no more remove by his own efforts the defilement caused by the touch of a dead body, than he could have broken Pharaoh's yoke, or delivered himself from the lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters.

And let the reader observe that it was not a question of offering a fresh sacrifice, nor yet of a fresh application of the blood. It is of special importance that this should be distinctly seen and understood.

The death of CHRIST cannot be repeated. **"Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him, For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, He liveth unto God."**

We stand, by the grace of GOD, in the full credit and value of the death of CHRIST; but, inasmuch as we are surrounded, on all sides, by temptations and snares; and as we have, within us, such capabilities and tendencies; and, further, seeing we have a powerful adversary who is ever on the watch to ensnare us, and lead us off the path of truth and purity, we could not get on for a single moment, were it not for the gracious way in which our GOD has provided for all our exigencies, in the precious death and all-prevailing advocacy of our Lord JESUS CHRIST. It is not merely that the Blood of JESUS CHRIST has washed away all our sins, and reconciled us to a Holy GOD, but **"we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."** **"He ever liveth to make intercession for us,"** and **"He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him."**

He is ever in the presence of GOD for us. He represents us there, and maintains us in the divine integrity of the place and relationship in which His atoning death has set us. Our case can never, by any possibility, fall through, in the hands of such an Advocate. He must cease to live, ere the very feeblest of His saints can perish. We are identified with Him and He with us.

*Now, then, Christian reader, what should be the practical effect of all this grace upon our hearts and lives?*

When we think of the death, and of the burning - of the blood, and of the ashes - of the atoning sacrifice, and the interceding Priest and Advocate, what influence should it exert upon our souls?

How should it act upon our consciences?

- should it lead us to think little of sin!
- should it cause us to walk carelessly and indifferently?
- should it have the effect of making as light and frivolous in our ways?

Alas! for the heart that can think so. We may rest assured of this, that the man who can draw a plea, from the rich provisions of divine grace, for lightness of conduct or levity of spirit, knows very little, if indeed he knows anything at all, of the true nature or proper influence of grace and its provisions. Could we imagine, for a moment, that the ashes of the heifer or the water of separation would have had the effect of making an Israelite careless as to his walk? Assuredly not. On the contrary, the very fact of such careful provision being made, by the goodness of GOD, against defilement, would make him feel what a serious thing it was to contract it.

Such, at least, would be the proper effect of the provisions of divine grace. The heap of ashes, laid up in a clean place, gave forth a double testimony; it testified of the goodness of GOD; and it testified of the hatefulness of sin. It declared that GOD could not suffer uncleanness upon His people; but it declared also that He had provided the means of removing it.

It is utterly impossible that the blessed doctrine of the sprinkled blood, of the ashes, and of the water of separation, can be understood and enjoyed, without its producing a holy horror of sin in all its defiling forms. And we may further assert that no one who has ever felt the anguish of a defiled conscience could lightly contract defilement.

A pure conscience is far too precious a treasure to be lightly parted with; and a defiled conscience is far too heavy a burden to be lightly taken up. But, blessed be the GOD of all grace, He has met all our need, in His own perfect way; and, He has met it, too, not to make us careless, but to make us watchful. **"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not."** But then he adds, **"If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the whole world"** (I John 2:1, 2).

But we must draw this section to a close, and shall merely add a word on the closing verses of our chapter.

**"And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even, and whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean, and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even"** (Numbers 19:21, 22).

In verse 18, we are taught that it needed a clean person to sprinkle the unclean; and in verse 21, we are taught that the act of sprinkling another defiled oneself.

Putting both these together, we learn, as another has said, "That any one who has to do with the

sin of another, though it be in the way of duty, to cleanse it, is defiled; not as the guilty person, it is true, but we cannot touch sin without being defiled." And we learn also that, in order to lead another into the enjoyment of the cleansing virtue of CHRIST's work, I must be in the enjoyment of that cleansing work myself. It is well to remember this. Those who applied the water of separation to others had to use that water for themselves. May our souls enter into this! May we ever abide in the sense of the perfect cleanness into which the death of CHRIST introduces us, and in which His priestly work maintains us! And oh! let us never forget that contact with evil defiles. It was so under the Mosaic economy, and it is so now.

~ end of chapter 19 ~

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