

Text: Heb 1.3d

We again turn to the slogans in the opening verses of Hebrews for our communion message. Today our phrase is this one:

When He had made purification of sins

Let's read those opening verses of Hebrews again so we can get our phrase in its context:

Read Heb 1.1-4

When we have communion services we focus on something connected to our redemption.

The things we already talked about have to do with our Saviour's nature, they give us an understanding why He and only He can save us from our sins.

- He is the heir
- He is the creator
- He is the radiance of God's glory
- He is the exact representation of God's nature
- He is the sustainer of all things

Our focus changes in this verse, leaving behind *who* our Saviour is to look at *what* He did to save us.

The phrases we looked at so far show us his *qualifications* to save us.

From qualifications, we turn to actions.

Our word in the text today is *purification*. One aspect of redemption is our cleansing.

There is a doctrine of purification that I talk about a lot, the idea behind the Day of Atonement (propitiation) that allows us to turn to God for salvation.

The word connected with the Day of Atonement has to do with appeasing (propitiating) God so God is willing to hear the prayers of sinners.

The word here focuses more on what happens to the sinner:

Lev 16.30 for it is on this day that **atonement** shall be made for you to **cleans** you; you will be **clean** from all your sins before the LORD.

It is the word of "cleansing" that we translate as "purification" in Heb 1.3.

I. The polluting effect of sin

- A. The book of Leviticus has 85 verses containing the word “unclean” 116 times, beginning with 5.2-3

Lev 5.2-3 ‘Or if a person touches any unclean thing, whether a carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean cattle or a carcass of unclean swarming things, though it is hidden from him and he is unclean, then he will be guilty.³ ‘Or if he touches human uncleanness, of whatever *sort* his uncleanness *may* be with which he becomes unclean, and it is hidden from him, and then he comes to know *it*, he will be guilty.

1. Uncleanness can contaminate the clean (if you touch a dead body, or a source of uncleanness, you are unclean)
 - a. Such could happen when caring for a sick person
 - b. Even if you were unaware of the contact
2. The concept of uncleanness lies behind Leviticus 11-16
 - a. Unclean foods make the eater unclean (Lev 11) (23 verses, 34 instances)
 - 1) Even clean animals that die “of themselves” are unclean (11.39-40)
 - 2) Contact with the carcasses of unclean animals makes the individual unclean (11.24)
 - b. The bloody nature of childbirth makes unclean (Lev 12)
 - c. The disease called “leprosy” in the OT makes unclean – both persons and anyone he or she touches (Lev 13-14)
 - d. Any sickness that causes a discharge is uncleanness (Lev 15)

All these images portray uncleanness as something external and internal: sin pollutes the soul through and through, it isn't merely something that can be washed off, it is an indelible mark of uncleanness.

- e. The Day of Atonement is meant to cleanse the land and nation so the people can approach God (Lev 16)

B. Jesus pointed out that ritual uncleanness is only a symbol: the problem is internal uncleanness (Mk 7.15)

Mk 7.15 there is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him; but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.

Mk 7.20-23 And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.²¹ "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.²³ "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."

1. The issue isn't merely touching dead animals, or nursing a sick friend
2. The issue is what goes on in the heart: alienated from God, oriented towards self, this pollutes the soul

Tit 3.3 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

This is the position sin puts us in, polluted by sin, separated from God

II. Cleansing from pollution

A. Ritual cleansing of the OT saint

1. For incidental uncleanness, from the activities of life, there were ritual washings

Lev 11.25 and whoever picks up any of their carcasses shall wash his clothes and be unclean until evening.

2. Other incidences of uncleanness required sacrifice
 - a. Childbirth made the mother unclean, cleansing involved sacrifice (the uncleanness issues *from* the inside to the outside)
 - b. Leprosy (in OT sense) considered unclean, a wasting of the body, the whole man in a kind of "living death"

c. Vows of purification (Nazirite vow) required a cleansing sacrifice as part of the process

B. A specific example of cleansing (2 Chron 29 & 30)

1. After years of idolatry and neglect, the temple itself was unclean: Hezekiah and his men set out to cleanse it (2 Chr 29.15-16)

2 Chr 29.15-16 They assembled their brothers, consecrated themselves, and went in to cleanse the house of the LORD, according to the commandment of the king by the words of the LORD. ¹⁶ So the priests went in to the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse *it*, and every unclean thing which they found in the temple of the LORD they brought out to the court of the house of the LORD. Then the Levites received *it* to carry out to the Kidron valley.

2. After this cleansing of the temple, Hezekiah held a great Passover, with people attending from all over

- a. Unfortunately, a group of men from the northern tribes were not ritually clean and partook contrary to the Law
- b. Hezekiah prayed for them, pleading their good intentions (their faith) and the Lord heard his prayer (2 Chr 20.18-20)

2 Chr 30.18-20 For a multitude of the people, *even* many from Ephraim and Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun, had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover otherwise than prescribed. For Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "May the good LORD pardon ¹⁹ everyone who prepares his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though not according to the purification *rules* of the sanctuary." ²⁰ So the LORD heard Hezekiah and healed the people.

The cleansing these men received was from the Lord, in response to their faith, rather than to their works.

III. The purification accomplished by the Atoner

A. Our text focuses on the cleansing offered by our Lord Jesus (Heb 1.3d)

Heb 1.3 And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. **When He had made purification of sins**, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

B. Titus echoes this with a full description of the Lord's cleansing us:

Tit 3.3-7 For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another. ⁴ But when the kindness of God our Savior and *His* love for mankind appeared, ⁵ He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷ so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to *the* hope of eternal life.

Conclusion:

As we partake of communion today, we partake in faith. Jesus is our purifier. He cleansed us so we can approach God. His action made us clean.