



The Blood of Jesus Purifies

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AS HUMANS, descendants of Adam, we have two problems for which we need a Savior. One problem is the sins we commit; the second problem is the unrighteousness that causes us to commit them. The salvation that our amazing God engineered for us addresses both issues. Ours is a complete salvation. “Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:25). His beautiful salvation process deals with our sin in two ways: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will (1) forgive us our sins and (2) purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). We have a two-fold problem, but God has provided a two-fold answer.

Andrew Murray explained it this way in his book, *The Two Covenants*:

In working out our salvation God bestowed upon us two wonderful gifts. We read; “*God sent forth His Son*, that He might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because we are sons, *God sent forth the Spirit of His Son* into your hearts crying, Abba Father.” Here we have the two parts of God’s work in salvation. The one, the more objective, what He did that we might become His children—He sent forth His Son. The second, the more subjective, what He did that we might live like His children: He sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. In the former we have the external manifestation of the work of redemption; in the other, its inward appropriation; the former for the sake of the latter. These two halves form the great whole and cannot be separated. (Andrew Murray, *The Two Covenants*)

Too often our understanding of our salvation is limited to the first part. How amazing it is that a perfectly holy God would love us so much that He would plan, initiate, and accomplish the process that would result in our sins being





forgiven. But that was only the beginning. Not only did He design a process by which our sins could be forgiven, but He also provided a way that we could be purified of the unrighteousness that causes us to sin—the root of unrighteousness that grows a fruit called sin. He has put to death the old Adam-nature that caused us to sin, and He is working in us to eradicate the leftover sin-patterns that are the vestiges of our old nature, but are completely incompatible with our new nature—the Life of Christ in us.

He has several methods that He uses to accomplish His purifying work, but I want to point you to one of those methods that might surprise you.

Exposed Flesh

That flesh in us nourishes the root of unrighteousness that grows the sin-fruit. God is after the root. When the root is gone, the fruit will cease to exist.

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and *then the outside also will be clean*” (Matt. 23:25-26). Jesus said that when the inside is clean the outside will be clean. We spend our energy trying to get rid of sins, when God wants to uproot sin’s source.

How does He do it? One of His methods may surprise you. God uses temptation to purify us. He is not doing the tempting, but He is using the temptation to flush out flesh.

“God is faithful; he will not *let you be tempted* beyond what you can bear” (1 Cor. 10:13). Who is in charge of what temptation reaches you? Look carefully at what the Scripture says about temptation: God will not *let you be tempted* beyond what you can bear. Do you see that God is in charge of what





temptation reaches you? If God is in charge of what temptation reaches you, can temptation have any purpose but good? “All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant” (Ps. 25:10). “You are good, and what you do is good” (Ps. 119:68).

God allows temptation in order to isolate, identify, and uproot unrighteousness and expose flesh.

Let me backtrack and clarify something. **God is not tempting you.** He is not the source of temptation. “When tempted, no one should say, ‘God is tempting me.’ For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone” (James 1:13). He, however, decides what temptation will be allowed to reach you.

Do you believe there is anything that Satan devises that can outwit God? Do you believe that Satan has the freedom to act without God’s permission? (See Luke 22:31; Job 1:12) Do you believe there are temptations Satan would like to bring your way for which God will not give him permission? Do you believe that God has a plan for your life? That He watches over you without intermission? Does God know a temptation is headed your way before it reaches you? What good, productive purpose might God have in mind by allowing temptation?

The Anatomy of a Sin

Temptation is not sin. Temptation does not have to lead to sin. However, no sin comes into being without temptation. What is the process by which temptation becomes sin?

“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin” (James 1:14-15).





In this passage, James is talking about temptation that is successful, or results in sin. He describes for us the process.

The Greek word translated “evil desire” really means strong or intense desire. It does not have a specific meaning of good or bad. In fact, it is the same word Jesus used in Luke 22:15 when He said to His disciples: “I have *eagerly desired* to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” Let’s restate the first phrase like this: “Each one is tempted when, by his own intense desire....”

This strong or intense desire, at its foundation, is built into you by the Creator. He has created you with a deep need for love and acceptance *so that* you will seek and find love and acceptance in Him. This need is the foundation of every desire. However, our God-created desires become misdirected when we seek to have them met outside of God. Anything outside of God only meets the surface of the need and provides only temporary relief and must be repeated over and over again. “As when a hungry man dreams that he is eating, but he awakens and his hunger remains; as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he awakens faint with his thirst unquenched” (Is. 29:8). We spend our resources on bread, which does not satisfy. We devour, but are still hungry; we eat, but are not filled.

When we repeatedly turn our strong and intense desire outward to the world, a pattern of behavior becomes fixed. The very need or desire that should have turned us to God has turned us away from Him. Instead of being freed from our need by having it eternally met, we become enslaved to our need by having it forever unsatisfied. We have, then, a misdirected desire. It has taken root in us. It becomes a *root of unrighteousness* and it grows a fruit called sin.

“By his own [strong, misdirected] desire, he is dragged away and enticed.”





This misdirected desire, this root, has developed a magnetic attraction to something in the world. We'll call the object or situation in the world a "stimulus." A stimulus in the world acts as a magnet to entice you and drag you away. James is really using a fishing term here. It means "to bait" or "to set a trap." Satan has dangled bait in front of you. Your misdirected desire has taken the bait and been lured into a trap.

The stimulus has no power of its own. What tempts one person does not tempt another. The power is not in the object or the occurrence in the world. The stimulus is neutral. Unless it is enticing, it cannot tempt. Its only power is the attraction it holds for you. It is *your own misdirected desire dragging you away*.

"After desire has conceived, it give birth to sin."

The root of unrighteousness in you mates with the stimulus in the world. The mating results in conception and sin is born. Sin is born of the mating between your misdirected desire and a stimulus in the world.

If one or the other (misdirected desire or stimulus in the world) did not exist, no mating could occur. It is unrealistic to think that the stimuli the world offers will disappear. Jesus said that we would have trouble in the world. He prayed that we not be removed from the world, but protected from its damaging influence. The stimuli in the world will not go away. Where does the answer lie?

The root of unrighteousness must be destroyed. Once the root is gone, the stimulus in the world has nothing to mate with. The stimulus loses its power and becomes a neutral object. *Once the inside is clean, the outside will be clean also.*





Temptation That Leads to Purity

Temptation can lead to sin, or temptation can lead to purity. Temptation forces choice. Every time we face temptation, we choose where to take our needs. Will we allow God to fulfill them and satisfy our eternal cravings? Or will we take the drive-through fast-food approach? Will we think long-term or quick fix? Will we choose God or will we choose Baal? Every temptation forces us deeper into the heart of the Father or anchors us more securely in the world.

In the same way that our flesh impulses became flesh-patterns by repeating an action over and over again, so temptation can cause us to become fixed in the way of the Spirit by persistent choice. We can choose Him over and over until He becomes our holy habit and the ways of the Spirit become our spontaneous choice.

Temptation shows us the places at which we are still responsive to sin. Temptation is a heart echogram. It pinpoints the weak places. It exposes flesh. Remember that the stimulus can only entice if a root of unrighteousness is present. Temptation exposes impurities. It un.masks our hearts so that sin cannot lurk there undetected. It exposes flesh and forces a crucifixion moment—a juncture at which you can choose to surrender your flesh to crucifixion, or to allow it to operate. Temptation forces flesh into the light where it can be destroyed.

Forgiveness of sins has been accomplished once for all at the cross.

Purification from unrighteousness is an ongoing process—a process that is being accomplished by the Lord Himself. His Life in us is uprooting the root that grows the fruit.

Faithful and Just

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and





purify us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). He is faithful. Faithful means trustworthy, true to His word. You can count on Him. He is faithful to what? He is faithful to the covenant. He has fulfilled the covenant and provided all that is necessary for our sins to be forgiven. The conditions have been met that provide for our forgiveness. When we come into agreement with Him about our sins, He is faithful to the covenant.

He is just. He is fair. He balances the scales. Having accomplished that part of the covenant agreement that provides for the payment of our debt, He now completes the covenant by making us able, by His own indwelling life, to be cleansed from the unrighteousness that causes us to sin.

Do you see? He is faithful—He will forgive your sins; He is just—He will purify you from all unrighteousness.

