

## **CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE**

### **HOW GOD DEALS WITH THE BELIEVERS' SINS— CLEANSING AND CONFESSION**

After a man has believed in the Lord Jesus, all his past sins are forgiven by the redemptive work of the Lord. But what should he do if he sins again after he has believed and is saved? It is not right to sin, but sinning is a fact of life. It is a shame for a Christian to sin, but it is also an undeniable fact that Christians do sin. We know that we should not fail and that we should not make mistakes, but we have to admit that we do have times of failure and we do make mistakes. What then will we do with these sins? To put it more accurately, what will God do with these sins? Earlier we mentioned temporary chastisement. God warns us that if we become apostate, we will be punished in the millennial kingdom. But if we want to deal with our sins and if we want to be cleansed of our sins, what should we do? How can our sins be washed away and forgiven? Although there are only three or four places in the whole Bible that mention this problem, they afford us clear light. In order to know how to deal with this problem, all we have to do is to read these few passages.

### **ONE CLEANSING BY THE BLOOD**

Tonight let us start from the beginning. We know that when the Lord Jesus was crucified on the cross, He shed His blood to wash away all of our sins. After He washed away our sins, He sat down at the right hand of God (Heb. 1:3). If, after we are saved and have been cleansed of our sins, we sin again and are defiled again, will the blood of the Lord Jesus wash away our sins again? Man thinks that if he sins, the blood of the Lord Jesus will have to cleanse away his sins again. But there is no such truth in the Bible. The blood cleanses away our sins only once; it never cleanses twice. There is no such thing as a re-cleansing of man's sins.

The book of Hebrews shows us clearly that there is only one cleansing of sin. Hebrews 10:1-14 says, "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the image itself of the things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, perfect those who draw near. Otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, because those worshipping, having once been purified, would have no longer had the consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there is a bringing to mind of sins year by year. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, coming into the world, He says, 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not delight. Then I said, Behold, I have come (in the roll of the book it is written concerning Me) to do Your will, O God.' Saying above, 'Sacrifice and offerings and burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You did not desire nor delight in' (which are offered according to the law), He then has said, 'Behold, I have come to do Your will.' He takes away the first that He may establish the second, by which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest stands daily, ministering and offering often the same sacrifices, which can never remove sins; but this One, having offered one sacrifice for sins, sat down forever on the right hand of

**God, henceforth waiting until His enemies are made the footstool for His feet. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified."**

We see that the Lord Jesus has offered Himself up once as a sin offering for our sins. He has accomplished eternal redemption once for all. By His one work we are eternally perfected. Verse 2 implies that those who have been purified no longer have the consciousness of sins. Hence, there is only one offering of the Lord Jesus. There is no second offering. If someone rejects this sin offering, there will be no other sin offering for him. This is why verse 26 says that if we sin willfully, there is no more sacrifice for sins. The sins of a sinner are forgiven through the cross of the Lord Jesus. After a Christian is saved, even if he sins, the Lord Jesus cannot die for his sins again. His one-time accomplishment has accomplished everything eternally. In Him everything is included.

Let us now read a few verses from chapter nine. Verses 25, 26, and 28 say, "Nor in order that He might offer Himself often, just as the high priest enters into the Holy of Holies year by year by the blood of other creatures; since then He would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world. But now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested for the putting away of sin through the sacrifice of Himself....So Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time to those who eagerly await Him, apart from sin, unto salvation." His coming the second time will have nothing to do with their sins; rather, it will be for their salvation. Verses 12 through 14 say, "Not through the blood of goats and calves but through His own blood, entered once for all into the Holy of Holies, obtaining an eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who are defiled sanctifies to the purity of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Verse 9, speaking of the first tabernacle, says that it is "a figure for the present time." According to this tabernacle "both gifts and sacrifices are offered, which are unable to perfect, according to conscience, him who worships."

By reading chapters nine and ten we see that those in the Old Testament differ from those in the New. If I were in the Old Testament and committed a sin, I would have only one way to deal with my sin. If I had enough money, I would buy a bull. If I did not have that much money, I would buy a goat. If I could not afford either, I would buy a turtledove. Then I would ask a priest to offer up the sacrifice for me to atone my sin. When I saw the bull or goat, I would be happy at heart, for I would know that the offering had served as a substitute for my punishment. Because the blood of the bull or goat would be like my blood, God would forgive me. I could go home happy and joyful at heart. I would be the happiest person on earth, because my sins would have been forgiven. I did not have my sins anymore. The darkness in my conscience would be removed, and I would suffer no more. But after two days, I would begin to think, What if the sacrifice offered that day did not work? What if the priest did not do the right thing the other day? Because of these thoughts, I would begin to worry and suffer again. Finally, I would decide to buy another bull or goat, take it to the priest, and tell him that the sin offering the other day was not done well, and ask him if he would perform the offering once more. The priest then would slaughter the bull or goat and offer it once more to God, and assure me that the bull or goat had been offered up for my sins.

When the conscience was troubled in the Old Testament, one could always bring another bull or goat to offer a sin offering through the priest. This is what Hebrews 9 shows us. It tells us that the blood of bulls and goats did not do a complete job. Chapter ten says that if a complete job had been done, there would have no longer been consciousness of sins. God reckoned that the work of bulls and goats was incomplete according to the conscience, because every time a person's conscience lost its peace, he felt that his sins had not yet been fully taken care of, and there was the need for further offerings.

However, the apostle shows us that a Christian does not have to do the same thing. The propitiatory sacrifice that God has set up in the New Testament is not a bull or goat but His very own Son. When His Son came to the earth, He said plainly that God did not desire nor delight in bulls and goats. Instead, God prepared a body for Him that He might die to accomplish the work of eternal redemption. The Lord has accomplished on the cross the sacrifice for eternal redemption. Now we are able to obtain this eternal redemption. He has offered up a sacrifice of eternal redemption, thus accomplishing an eternal redemption. Because of this eternal redemption, we are eternally perfected. He is the Son of God. Because His eternal work has been accomplished once, we do not need to offer up sin offerings anymore. We cannot offer up a sin offering for the same sin any longer, for the Lord Jesus has accomplished all the work.

The Son of God cannot be crucified for our sins again. One cannot trample underfoot the blood of God's Son and make it something common. If something is one of a kind, it is precious. But if there are two of a kind, they are common. To treat the blood of the Son as common means to consider it the same as the blood of bulls and goats. But if you honor His blood and consider it as something unique, it will be precious to you. Here is the sin offering which He has accomplished. After the Lord has accomplished this work, God said that there cannot be any other work. The Son of God cannot die again. His work is finished. If you want it, you have to trust Him for it. You cannot add anything to it. Either you depend on Him or you have nothing. After a man has been enlightened by the truth, there is no more sacrifice for sins for him. There is only one sin offering. This is what we preach to others. Those who come to worship through this one sacrifice will have their consciences cleansed. They will no longer have the consciousness of sins. All their sins are washed away, and there is no more consciousness of sins. Furthermore, there is no need for another cleansing. The Bible never teaches the doctrine of a second cleansing. The blood of the Lord Jesus cannot cleanse us again. Once we have been cleansed, we are cleansed forever.

### **RECEIVING THE CONTINUAL CLEANSING AFTER WE HAVE BELIEVED**

The question now is this: What should we do if we sin again? What should we do if we become filthy again? All the sins we committed before we were saved have been washed away by His blood. But what should we do about the sins that are committed after we are saved? We do not want to be chastised. We do not want to lose the kingdom. We do not want to suffer the hurt of the second death. What can we do before God? Let us consider 1 John 2:1: "My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin." A Christian's goal is not to sin. John wrote these words so that we would not sin.

According to the status that Christians possess, it is possible for us not to sin. Unfortunately, according to actual history, we often do sin. Positionally speaking, we should not sin. But experientially speaking, we often do sin. There is no need to sin. But sin is an unshakable fact.

John continues, "If anyone sins." Here we are dealing with the problem of a Christian who sins. He is a little one of God; he belongs to God. If he sins, what should he do? "We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous." It does not say that we have an Advocate with God; rather, it says that we have an Advocate with the Father. Thus, this verse refers to the children of God. It refers to those that have been saved. If anyone among the saved ones, the children of God, sins, he has an Advocate with the Father. This is not a dispute in a law court, but a matter within a family.

The word Advocate in the original language is paracletos. Para means alongside of. To be alongside of means that you are there and another is there. You are in Shanghai, and this one is also in Shanghai. When you go to Canton, this one also goes to Canton. It is like railway tracks. You cannot have one track in Szechwan and another in Nanking. Cletos means helper. A paracletos, therefore, is someone who is alongside helping. You can run away. But wherever you run, the paracletos will be there also. Many who help are very good, but they sometimes come too late. There may be a lot of rice in Shanghai, but the starving ones in Szechwan will not be able to get it, because it is not alongside. The Greeks used the word paracletos to refer to a defense lawyer in court. Suppose that you do not understand the law, and others accuse you. Others may sue you or take advantage of you. But you do not have a way to answer them. Now there is a paracletos to answer for you. Others charge that you have sinned. But your paracletos will say that you do not have sin. He will answer for you like a defense lawyer. The meaning here is to have someone next to you to speak for you. If a Christian sins, there is One with the Father speaking for him.

Satan will never stop his accusations against the Christians. Revelation 12:10 tells us that he accuses the brothers day and night. Day and night we are the defendants and he is the accuser. But we have an Advocate, who is Jesus the Righteous. Here it says that He is the Advocate. Here He is not the gracious One, but the righteous One. Why does it not say that He is the gracious One? It is because in the heavenly law court there is no talk of grace, in the same way that there is no talk of grace in earthly law courts. Any judge who wants to forgive others is an unrighteous judge. Only those who are for righteousness can be judges. God is for righteousness. He did not forgive our sins unrighteously. He did not overlook our sins, gloss over our sins, or let us get by with our sins. Rather, He judged our sins in righteousness.

The Lord Jesus does not defend us by saying that the temptation was too great and as little children we could not handle it, and that therefore God has to grant us grace. The Lord Jesus does not say that Christians are too small and their knowledge is too little, that the flesh is too weak and the enticement of the world is too strong. He does not say that the wiles of Satan are too cunning and that there is no way to reject Satan. This is not the way that the Lord Jesus makes our defense. He does not plead for grace. Neither

is He there as a dispenser of grace. John says that Jesus Christ is the Righteous. He tells God that on account of Him and what He has done, God has to forgive us.

How does this Advocate make a defense for us? We are told in the next verse: "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole world" (1 John 2:2). The Lord Jesus makes His defense for us based on His accomplished work, that is, His propitiation on the cross for us. As a result, we are able to come to God. This is a complete propitiatory sacrifice. It includes all the sins of all the Christians in time and space. When this propitiatory sacrifice is shown to God, God no longer has a reason to punish the Christians. The Lord's propitiatory sacrifice is not just for past sins, but for all present and future sins as well. The verb in this verse is in the present tense, not in the past tense. God cannot condemn us based on Satan's accusation, because Christ's redemptive work accomplished on the cross includes all the sins of today and all the sins that will be committed until the day of His return. All our sins are included in His work. God must forgive us. He cannot do otherwise, because this forgiveness has a foundation.

### **THE LORD JESUS AS ADVOCATE FOR CHRISTIANS**

The work of the Lord Jesus as Savior is for sinners. The work of the Lord Jesus as Advocate is for Christians. As the Savior, the Lord Jesus accomplished the work of the cross. As the Advocate, the Lord Jesus applies the work of the cross. The sins of sinners are forgiven through the redemption of the cross. The sins of Christians are forgiven through the advocacy that is based upon the redemption of the cross. This advocacy presents the work of the cross to God. It shows God what the Lord Jesus has done, so that God cannot punish man for his sins. We have an Advocate before God. His death is presented to God.

The Lord Jesus has become an Advocate for every Christian who sins, in the same way that He has become the Savior for every sinner. It is not that first we repent, believe, and are regenerated, and then the Lord Jesus dies for us. Rather, it was while we were yet sinners that Christ became our Savior (Rom. 5:8). In the same way, it is not that we first repent, and then He becomes our Advocate. Rather, even while we are sinning, He becomes our Advocate. It is not that He becomes our Advocate when we confess our sins before God. Rather, even while we are sinning, He becomes our Advocate. This is why John says that if any man sins, we have an Advocate with the Father. He does not say that first we repent, confess our sins, and pray for forgiveness, and then He becomes our Advocate. Instead, John says that if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father already. Whenever you sin, at that moment the Lord Jesus is already your Advocate before God. At that very moment, the Lord Jesus will show God His work of the cross, and God will have to let your sins go. A Christian can confess and repent because the Lord Jesus is his Advocate. Because we have the Lord Jesus as our Advocate, advocating and speaking for us while we sin, we eventually repent, confess our sins, and ask for forgiveness. The Lord Jesus' work of advocacy does not happen at the moment we repent. Rather, it happens while we are sinning. When we sin, the Lord Jesus is our Advocate already. Afterwards, we are brought to repentance and confession. The Lord Jesus accomplished all the work in one day. Everything is included in that work. Today

the Lord can present this work to God. God can no longer punish us, because all the debts have been paid. All the debts, past and future, are paid. All our sins have been washed away by the blood of Jesus.

## **WALKING IN THE LIGHT AS HE IS IN THE LIGHT**

He is the Advocate. But what should we do on our part? Let us now go to 1 John 1:7. "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from every sin." What does it mean to be in the light? Man thinks that to be sinless and to be holy is to be in the light. But that is not the sense here. John does not say that we should walk in the light as God walks in the light. It is not said of God here that He walks. If that had been said, the meaning would be entirely different. It says here that we should walk in the light as He is in the light.

What is the meaning of this difference? For example, in this meeting hall there are many light bulbs, but we call them the light. We are now sitting in the light. On the other hand, while we are meeting, many people often sit on the stairs next door. They are in darkness. They may not have sinned out there. They may not have stolen from others out there. Perhaps they are even better and holier than we. But those who sit in the light can see, while those who sit in darkness cannot see. For God to be in the light means that God can now be seen.

In the Old Testament, God was shrouded in darkness. He was in the Holy of Holies, and man could not see Him. In the Holy Place there was a lamp, and in the outer court there was the sun, but in the Holy of Holies, there was no light at all. God was an unknown God there. Man could only make conjectures about Him. But thank the Lord that today God has been manifested in Jesus of Nazareth. God is now in the light; He is no longer in darkness. Today God is a known God, a revealed God. When you see God today, you know that He is God. The gospel concerning Jesus of Nazareth is the revelation of God. The shining out of the light of the gospel is the shining out of God. When the light of the gospel shines out, we see God. I am not saying that we should not be holy or that we should not reject sin. I am saying that this verse tells us that as God is in the light, we should therefore walk in the light. As God has manifested Himself in the light of the gospel, even so we should see God in the light of the gospel. We no longer look for God in the Old Testament. Today God has manifested Himself. If He had not manifested Himself, we would be hopeless. If He had not manifested Himself, we would still be bewildered, not knowing what kind of God He is. We would still have to make conjectures about Him. Thank God that He has been manifested. Today our God is no longer a "backstage" God. He is now the "onstage" God, the revealed God. The word revelation is apocalypsis in Greek. Apo means away, and calypsis means veil. Hence, apocalypsis means the taking away of a veil. I used to watch theater performances. Onstage there is always a thick curtain. You do not know what is behind the curtain. An apocalypsis is the opening up of the curtain.

Today God is in the light. He is an open God. What then should we do? We should walk in the light. This means we will see God and know God in the light. Today we do not know God by way of conjecture as those in the Old Testament did. Today God has spoken. There is no need to make conjectures anymore. Today God is already in the light. He has already revealed Himself in the gospel. If we walk in this revelation, the result is fellowship. There will be fellowship between Christians, and there will be fellowship with God.



Since we are participants in the gospel and since God is also a participant in the gospel, the blood of His Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we truly know God in the gospel, we will see that the blood of His Son Jesus is continually and eternally cleansing us of all sin (1 John 1:9). In the original language, this verse says that the blood of Jesus His Son is continually cleansing us from all sin. The Bible never shows us that the blood of the Lord Jesus does a second cleansing work. It shows us that the blood of Jesus cleanses us all the time. There are no multiple cleansings. There is only the continual cleansing. The Bible never has the thought of multiple cleansings. The biblical truth is a continual cleansing.

The blood of the Son of God continually cleansing us from our sins is the work of the Advocate. The work of the cross is once for all. But the operation of His cleansing and His blood is continuous. The cross dealt with our sins and washed away our sins only once. But it is forever effective. Why is it forever effective? Why is it cleansing us continually? It is because His Son is presenting the accomplished work to God continually. It is not a re-cleansing, but a continual demonstration to God that He has died and that all the sins are dealt with already. Today He is continually cleansing away all of our sins. All our sins are included here. The effectiveness of His blood lasts forever because the Lord Jesus is our Advocate continually in heaven. His work as the Advocate is a continuation and extension of His work as the Savior. The work of the Savior happened only once, but it is continued in the work of the Advocate. This is God's side of the work.

## **FORGIVENESS THROUGH CONFESSION**

We must never neglect God's side. However, we must never forget our side either. It is true that the Lord Jesus is presenting His blood and His accomplished work before God continually. But if we sin intentionally, continuously, and without repentance, repudiation, or an inclination to deal with our sins, the work of the Lord's blood will lose its effect and efficaciousness for us. The work of the Lord's crucifixion is not just for us, but for the whole world also. The one work of the Lord Jesus has included everyone. But this work of the Lord can be realized only in those who believe in Him. Christ's work of advocacy is the same in principle. It is continuous. Regardless of whether a Christian will confess and repent of his sins or not, the cleansing work of Christ is continually effective. But how this can be realized in the believers is another problem.

First John 1:7 tells us that a Christian is forgiven of his sins before God because of the work of Christ. On the other hand, verse 9 shows us what we should do on our side. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." First John 2:1 tells us that the Lord Jesus is our Advocate. But 1 John 1:9 tells us that on our side we have to confess our sins. This does not mean that it is our confession that grants us forgiveness. If confession itself can earn forgiveness, the forgiveness is unrighteous. Suppose that I stole a hundred dollars from a brother, and I go to him and confess my sin. If he forgives me on account of that confession, is he righteous? If that were the case, I could steal another hundred dollars again and could confess again. If confession alone can earn us forgiveness, this is the most unrighteous thing there is. If that were the case, we could not say that God is faithful and righteous. We would have to say that God is an unrighteous, sloppy God, who overlooks our sins.

Why does John say that God is righteous to forgive? It is because the Lord Jesus has become our Advocate. His blood has cleansed away all of our sins. Our sins have been judged and condemned in Christ. Therefore, when we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us. If I have stolen money from a brother and someone has paid it back for me, then confession will indeed bring me forgiveness. Without the blood of the Son of God, God's forgiveness would be unrighteous. Today the blood of the Son of God has been shed. The Son of God has become the Advocate before God. God has to forgive us now. If He does not forgive, He will be unrighteous. Today when I confess my sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive my sins. The Word of God tells me that the Lord Jesus has died. God has to be faithful to His own Word. He also has to be righteous regarding the work of the Lord Jesus. That is why He has to forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God's forgiveness of our sins is based entirely upon the blood of the Lord Jesus. The sins of the sinners are forgiven through the blood of the Lord Jesus. The sins of the Christians are likewise forgiven through the blood of the Lord Jesus. Because the Lord Jesus is the Savior, God can forgive the sins of the sinners. Because the Lord is the Advocate, God can forgive the sins of the believers. In the Lord Jesus' being both the Advocate and the Savior, it is His blood that grants us forgiveness of sins and justification.

## **CONFESSION**

What then is confession? The apostle did not say that confession is praying that God would forgive our sins. Many prayers and pleadings before God for forgiveness are not confessions. Nor did the apostle say that confession is just to utter something with our mouth. What the apostle said was that we have to acknowledge the sin, to treat the sin as sin. Confession means that we stand on the same ground as God does, admitting before God that our deed is indeed a sin. The moment you confess your sin, you will be forgiven. To confess is not to plead for forgiveness. Forgiveness is the Lord Jesus' business. What you have to do is judge the sin as sin. You have to judge it, acknowledge it, and confess that it is wrong. You have to take sin as sin and treat sin as sin. What you must confess before God is that a sin is indeed a sin. If you confess your sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive all your sins and unrighteousness. Just as a sinner receives the forgiveness of sins through the work of the Lord Jesus, a Christian receives the forgiveness of sins from God by judging his sin as sin and through the work of Christ upon him. Simply put, confession is our saying that something is sin because God says that it is sin. For example, suppose a brother's child goes out into the street and plays with some bad children. Because he picks up foul language and gets into mischief, the brother brings in the children who have been leading his son to do these things and tells them that they are wrong and that they should no longer play with his child. He also tells his son not to play with them anymore. The child says that he wishes to confess that he is wrong and asks for forgiveness. But although he says this with his mouth, in his heart he is thinking of a way to sneak out the back door to go out and play again. He does not stand one with his father. At issue here is not forgiveness, but whether or not we acknowledge something as sin.

Confession means that whatever God considers as sin I also consider as sin. It means that I say the same as what God has said. If God says that it is wrong, I say that it is



wrong also. Confession is your recognition and declaration of sin. When you do it, God forgives your sins and cleanses you from all unrighteousness. He is not forgiving you because of your confession; He is forgiving you because of the work of the Lord Jesus. His blood is the basis of everything in this matter. But through confession, the blood produces forgiveness. Salvation is by the blood through faith. But forgiveness is by the blood through confession. This is like saying that tap water comes by the source of the water department through the pipes. In the same way, forgiveness comes by the blood through confession.

## **THE OLD TESTAMENT TYPE OF THE RED HEIFER**

There is a kind of cleansing in the Old Testament which is a type of the forgiveness of believers in the New Testament. The words in 1 John 1 and 2 are typified in the Old Testament. Let us read what can be considered as the only portion in the Old Testament dealing with the forgiveness of the Christians' sins.

Numbers 19:1-13 says, "And Jehovah spoke to Moses and to Aaron, saying, This is the statute of the law which Jehovah has commanded, saying, Tell the sons of Israel to bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect, and upon which a yoke has never come. And you shall give her to Eleazar the priest, and she shall be taken outside the camp and slaughtered before him; and Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood with his finger, and shall sprinkle some of her blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times. And the heifer shall be burned in his sight; her skin, her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall be burned; and the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes and bathe his flesh in water, and afterwards he shall come into the camp; and the priest shall be unclean until evening. And he who burns it shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until evening. And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and place them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the assembly of the sons of Israel for the water for impurity; it is a purification of sin. And he who gathers the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until evening. And this shall be to the sons of Israel, and to the stranger who sojourns among them, for a perpetual statute. He who touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days; he shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean; but if he does not purify himself on the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean. Whoever touches a dead person, the body of any man who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of Jehovah, and that person shall be cut off from Israel; because the water for impurity was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him."

In Numbers 19 a sacrifice is described. This sacrifice is the most unique sacrifice in the Old Testament. The book of Numbers is not a book on offerings. The book on offerings is Leviticus. But this sacrifice is not mentioned in Leviticus. Rather, it is mentioned in Numbers. We know that the Passover lamb was slain in Egypt. This typifies the Lord Jesus' death for our sins. At Mount Sinai God showed us again what the Passover lamb is. The five offerings in Leviticus are the Passover lamb analyzed and broken down. They show us the different aspects of the Lord Jesus and how He satisfies God's requirements in redeeming man's sins. All of these are for the sinners and were spoken of at Mount Sinai. The book of Numbers, however, is a book on the

wilderness. It is a history of the children of Israel's wandering in the wilderness of Paran. There the children of Israel lived as sojourners in the wilderness. They were a nation sojourning in the world. There God gave them another sacrifice, which is the sacrifice of the red heifer.

All offerings are for God, and thus their blood is to be poured out. This is the only sacrifice whose blood is first sprinkled directly before the tabernacle and then burnt up. Most offerings are of male bulls and goats. But this sacrifice alone is a heifer, a female cow. Most sacrifices have no color specification. But this sacrifice has to be of a specific color; it must be a red heifer. Most sacrifices are offered on the altar. Only this sacrifice is burned outside the camp. Other sacrifices are for the forgiveness of sins. But the second half of this sacrifice is for cleansing. The five offerings of Leviticus describe the Passover lamb. They are prepared for sinners. This is why they are recorded in Exodus and Leviticus. This sacrifice, however, is prepared for the people of God. This is why it is recorded in Numbers. It is a sacrifice for the experience of God's people in the way of the wilderness. The other sacrifices are for sin. Only this sacrifice is for the filth in the wilderness. Other sacrifices are male animals. This sacrifice is female. Everything that is related to sinners is male, and everything that is related to God's people is female (Deut. 21:3-9). Leviticus 5:6 says that a female goat can be offered up as a trespass offering. The trespass offering is not just for sinners, but is frequently for believers. It is not like the sin offering, which is strictly for sinners. The trespass offering is for both sinners and believers. When something is offered up for God's people, it can be female. This is the regulation in the Old Testament.

This sacrifice, though dealing with man's offenses toward God, is actually offered up for believers. The color red signifies redemption before God. This sacrifice is not offered on the altar, because it is not for sinners. A sinner has to pass through the altar before he can come to God. This sacrifice is burned outside the camp. The camp is the place where the people of God are. Hence, the camp is a type of the church. To be outside the camp is to be cut off from the fellowship. But if you are cut off from the fellowship, a sacrifice is waiting for you. This is a sacrifice to deal with the believers' sins. It is for the restoration of fellowship.

Let us now consider the sacrifice itself. This sacrifice is of two parts. In the first part, the blood of the sacrifice is offered. In the second part, the sacrifice is burned. The first part begins from the second half of Numbers 19:2. "Tell the sons of Israel to bring you a red heifer without blemish, in which there is no defect, and upon which a yoke has never come." All those who understand the Bible know that this refers to the Lord Jesus. Hebrews 10 indicates that this red heifer refers to the Lord Jesus. What are the Lord Jesus' qualifications to become this sacrifice? Numbers 19:2 says that this sacrifice was to be without spot and without blemish and was never to have come under a yoke. Being without spot and blemish refers to His life. Never having come under a yoke refers to His work. In life He is without blemishes. In work He has never been under a yoke. In His life and person, the Lord Jesus is without spot and blemish. Not only is He without blemish, but also in His experience He is clean, that is, He has never been under a yoke. He is a clean man, and He has a clean experience. Many people are without blemish, but they have been yoked. But in His experience, the Lord Jesus was never yoked. He never touched the things of sin. He was never oppressed by sin or dominated by sin. He was

never provoked to sin. He is completely free. Tonight we cannot say this for ourselves, for we are not free people. We have been oppressed by sin and have been dominated by sin. We have been provoked by sin and are not our own masters. The Lord Jesus has no spots. Only the Lord Jesus has never been put under the yoke of sin.

This is a heifer, a female cow, signifying that this sacrifice was offered up for believers. It is red. That means it is offered up for the redemption of sin. In the Bible, red signifies the redemption of sin. Every time the Bible mentions scarlet or red, it implies sin. The woman in Revelation 18 rides on a scarlet beast and wears a scarlet robe. These refer to her sins.

Numbers 19:4 tells us what happens after the heifer is slaughtered. "And Eleazar the priest shall take some of her blood with his finger, and shall sprinkle some of her blood toward the front of the tent of meeting seven times." The priest did not do many things. He only sprinkled some blood before God in the tabernacle. This shows us that the death of the Lord Jesus has satisfied the requirements of God. The blood was not sprinkled on the children of Israel. It was sprinkled directly before the tent of meeting. The tabernacle is the place where God met with the Israelites. It is a type of the fellowship between God and man. Where God's tabernacle is, there God is also. Christ is the tabernacle; He is God living among men. He is full of God's grace and truth. He tabernacled among us (John 1:14). This is the fellowship. How can we have fellowship? There must be the blood, that is, sin must be judged. If there is no blood, man cannot come to God.

There are only two ways for man to come to God. Either he comes without sin, or he comes with the blood. If you are without sin, you can come to God in bold strides, and He can do nothing to you. But if you have sin, there must be the shedding of the blood (Heb. 9:22), because God must judge sin. If sin is not judged, man cannot have fellowship with God. God cannot overlook man's sins. God cannot let man's sins go by. If man has sin, he must come to God with the blood. God is a judging God. Without passing through judgment, sin cannot be removed. Judgment demands the blood. Therefore, there must be the shedding of the blood before fellowship can be recovered. The blood was sprinkled seven times. Seven signifies perfection. The death of the Lord Jesus has satisfied God; His blood is sufficient to wash away our sins. Here all the problems are completely solved. God's righteous requirements are met. God said that the work is done. This is the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross. It has been done once and is forever finished. There is no need for another red heifer to die. It is good enough for one red heifer to die. In the first part of this offering we see that the sprinkling of the blood signifies that the problem of the sinner is solved. This part of the offering is the same as all the other offerings in the Old Testament. They are all just the Passover lamb.

Now we have to consider the second part of the offering, which shows us what is to be done for the sins of the believers. Numbers 19:5 says, "And the heifer shall be burned in his sight." This is most unique, for the heifer was not simply burned, but "her skin, her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall be burned; and the priest shall take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet, and cast them into the midst of the burning of the heifer." God judged sin. After a little of the blood was sprinkled, the rest of the blood was poured into the fire. Then the whole heifer was also cast into the fire. The priest burned the whole heifer—skin, flesh, blood, dung, and all. In addition, cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet were all cast into the midst of the burning. In verse 9 we are told what happened after the heifer was burned: "A man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer,

and place them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the assembly of the sons of Israel for the water for impurity; it is a purification of sin." After the heifer was slaughtered, the blood was applied. But after the heifer was burned and became ashes, the ashes were to be applied.

What are ashes? Ashes are the final state of everything in the world. I am not referring to the facts of chemistry, but to our everyday experience. Ashes are the last state of all things. If a table undergoes corruption again and again, its last state will be ashes. Hence, ashes represent the final state. When something has reached its very end, and cannot be changed to something else anymore, it is ashes.

Everything of the heifer is burned. Note particularly the blood. In these ashes are the skin, the flesh, and the blood. This means that in these ashes are the redemption of Christ and the eternal efficacy of His redemption. Christ is eternally efficacious before God. He has become the ashes. The shedding of His blood is eternally efficacious. Even the blood has become ashes. The work of redemption is finished. The red heifer portrays the Lord's redemptive work, and this work has now become ashes.

There are three other things added to the offering: the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet. In the Bible, when cedar wood and hyssop are put together, it denotes the whole created universe. First Kings 4:33 says that Solomon had great wisdom. He spoke of all the trees, from the cedar tree to the hyssop. He went from alpha to omega. He exhausted the whole subject. The Bible uses the cedar tree and the hyssop to represent the whole world. Putting the cedar wood and the hyssop into the fire means that when the Lord Jesus was judged for sin, not only was He burned, but all of us were burned as well. God has judged all men in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. When the fire passed over Him, you and I, the cedar wood and the hyssop, all, passed through the same fire. Everything in the world, whether great or small, sweet or bitter, rich or poor, was laid on Him and judged by God. Here scarlet was also put in the fire. Isaiah 1:18 says that our sins are as scarlet. Hence, scarlet denotes sin. Not only has God judged us, but He has judged our sins as well. All sins were included with the Lord Jesus. When He was judged by God, our sins were judged as well. All the problems related to sin were also judged. Hence, the casting of the cedar wood, the hyssop, and the scarlet into the fire indicates that the whole world and all the sins of the world have passed through the fire with the Lord Jesus and have become ashes. The ashes include all the work of the Lord Jesus. They also include us and our sins. These ashes are eternally efficacious. Hence, this work has an efficaciousness that meets all of God's demands before Him. These ashes were kept outside the camp in a clean place.

From Numbers 19:11 on we are told about the function of the ashes. "He who touches the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with the water on the third day..." Verse 9 tells us about this water for impurity. "And a man who is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and place them outside the camp in a clean place; and they shall be kept for the assembly of the sons of Israel for the water for impurity; it is a purification of sin." The impurity spoken of refers to the impurity of touching a dead body. Why is touching a dead body considered an impurity? It is because death is the evidence of sin. Without sin there would be no death. Therefore,

where there is death, there is also sin. A dead body means that sin has done its work. The result of the work of sin is death. For this reason, the Old Testament uses leprosy as a symbol of curable sin and a dead body as a symbol of incurable sin. When a man is dead in sin and trespasses and therefore dead in his flesh, he is a dead body. The Lord Jesus talked about these dead ones. He said to let the dead bury the dead (Matt. 8:22). If you touch these dead ones, if you have intercourse with the world, if you build up a friendship with it, and if you have your living among it, you are touching dead bodies. If you touch dead bodies, you will surely be infected and defiled with impurities. When Christians sin and fail through touching the world, the ashes are needed.

The ashes are the work of the cross. They are put into the living water (Num. 19:17) and become the water for impurity. The living water typifies the Holy Spirit. Once while the children of Israel journeyed, they struck the rock and out came living water (Exo. 17:6). First Corinthians 10:4 says that the rock was Christ. Hence, the living water refers to what flows forth from Christ, which is the Holy Spirit. Taking the living water and making it the water for impurity means that there is the need for the power of the Holy Spirit to be upon us. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, the work of the Lord will be in vain. If there are only the ashes of the red heifer without the living water, they will not be of much use. With the work of the Lord Jesus, there is still the need of the Holy Spirit. Only by the mixing together of the two will we be purified and cleansed. The Lord Jesus does not have to die again. We merely apply the efficacy of the one-time work of the Lord for our cleansing. The ashes of the red heifer represent the eternal and immutable efficacy of the Lord's work on the cross. It is this efficacy that is cleansing us. Because the Lord Jesus has died, the efficacy of His ashes becomes eternal, and by the Holy Spirit He is now applying this efficacy to us.

Every time we sin, we do not have to bring a bull to God again. The efficacy of the Lord's work two thousand years ago continues until today. By those ashes we are cleansed.

What happens if a man is not cleansed? Numbers 19:12 says, "He shall purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day, and so be clean; but if he does not purify himself the third day and on the seventh day, he will not be clean." Why is such a one not clean until the seventh day? The man cleanses himself on the third day, but he is not clean until the seventh day. He is not clean until the seventh day because the goal is the seventh day, not the third day. The third day is the day the Lord Jesus resurrected. After the Lord resurrected, He gave to us the word of the forgiveness of sin. What then is the seventh day? In the Bible the seventh day is the Sabbath. Hebrews 4:9 says that there is another Sabbath. This is the universal, great Sabbath, which will take place in the millennium. This means that a person who is not cleansed in the age of the Lord's resurrection will not be clean in the age of the kingdom. If he is cleansed today in the age of the Lord's resurrection, he will be clean on the seventh day, the age of the kingdom. The third day is for the seventh day. The problem is with the seventh day. The problem of eternity is settled. The problem of being God's children in this age is also settled. All other problems are settled. The only problem today is whether we will be clean in the kingdom.

At the end of this portion, Numbers 19:13 says, "Whoever touches a dead person, the body of any man who has died, and does not purify himself, defiles the tabernacle of Jehovah." What is the tabernacle of the Lord? The tabernacle of the Lord today is not a meeting hall or some chapel.

The tabernacle of the Lord today is our body. If a man destroys his body, God will destroy him (1 Cor. 3:17). If a man defiles his body, God will say, "That person shall be cut off from Israel" (Num. 19:13b). Such a person will be rejected from Israel. It does not say he will be rejected from Egypt, but from Israel. This means that at the time the children of God reign in the kingdom, such a one will be kept outside. If a person is not clean today, he will be kept outside the kingdom in the future.

Following this we read: "Because the water for impurity was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is still on him." All the unconfessed sins and all the sins that have not passed through the blood of the Lord Jesus leave their uncleanness on the person. This uncleanness will cause one to lose his share in the coming kingdom. Conversely, those who have been cleansed by the water for impurity will be clean in the kingdom. Let me tell you one thing: No sin that has been repented of, that has been confessed and put under the blood of the Lord Jesus, and that has had the ashes applied to it, can ever raise its head at the judgment seat. The water for impurity is able to remove uncleanness because of the power of the blood in it. It is the power of redemption in this water that enables it to remove the uncleanness. Every sin that does not have the effectiveness of the Lord's redemption applied to it will leave uncleanness on the person until the "seventh day." Hence, do not let your sins remain on you. You must remove the uncleanness with the ashes of the Lord Jesus. I thank the Lord that the Son of God does not have to die for me anymore. By His ashes I am clean. But it is foolish as well as dangerous to allow any uncleanness to remain.