

The Brazen Laver of the Tabernacle

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Date: 13 December 2020

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- [0 : 0 0] Welcome to our service this evening, and as we draw near to God in an act of worship, let us seek his blessing to be upon his word. Let us pray.
- Amen.
- Amen.
- Amen.
- [3 : 4 5] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. O, that we would as a nation seek the mercy of God in Jesus Christ.
- We pray, O Lord, that thou would bless us now as we wait upon thee. And O, that we ask with the forgiveness of our many sins. In Jesus' name and for his sake.
- Amen. Let us now read the word of God as we find it in the Gospel of John and chapter 17. These words spake Jesus and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, Father, the hour has come.
- Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee. As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.
- And this is life eternal, that they may know thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth. I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.
- [4 : 5 7] And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self for the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.
- Thy the word, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them.
- And I have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.
- And all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I am come to thee. Holy Father, keep them through thine own name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are.
- While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name. Those that thou gavest me, I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled.
- [6 : 0 5] And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Lord, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe in me through their word. That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.

That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them, for they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.

[7 : 11] And that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am. That they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me, for thou lovest me before the foundation of the world.

All righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee. And these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

May the Lord bless unto us the reading of that portion of his word. Now, seeking the Lord's help and blessing, let us turn to the Old Testament and to the book of Exodus.

And we shall take two readings this evening. Our first reading will be from Exodus chapter 30, and reading at verse 17. And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and a suit also of brass to wash with all.

And thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein. For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat.

[8 : 33] When they go unto the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not. Or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the Lord.

So shall they wash their hands and their feet, that they die not. And it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout the generations.

And again in chapter 38, that is chapter 38 of Exodus. And we shall read at verse 8.

And he made the laver of brass, and the foot of brass, of the looking-glasses of the woman assembling, which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

Last week we looked at the first object that would meet the eye of the worshipper, as they entered into the court of the tabernacle through the gate, the altar of burnt offering.

[9 : 40] We noted that this altar was the place of sacrifice, the place of substitution, the place of satisfaction, the place of faith, and the place of assurance.

At the altar, an innocent lamb bore the judgment of the guilty, just as Jesus, as the Lamb of God, died on the altar of the cross at Golgotha, bearing the judgment of God's wrath against our sin.

And he did so on our behalf. The altar of burnt offering and the cross of Jesus both speak of justification.

There is not long since we made a study on this doctrine of justification. But I will again note one or two things. Justification is a word that is borrowed from the law courts.

It is a declaration made by a judge that a person is innocent and can be set free. So justification is a judicial act of God, whereby he declares us righteous.

[10 : 53] It does not mean that we are made righteous, but rather that God regards us as righteous and declares us to be righteous. Let us hear how the Catechism puts it.

Justification is an act of God's free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us and received by faith alone.

God declares us righteous when we trust in Jesus Christ's work on the cross on our behalf. Justification is an act of God's free grace, Sometimes believers, because they are conscious of indwelling sin, may conclude that they cannot be in a justified state.

But justification makes no actual change in us. It is a declaration by God concerning us. For instance, the Israelite who came to the altar and who left his sins conveyed by the leaning of his hand upon the sacrifice, thereby identifying himself by faith with the sacrifice, would go home rejoicing.

He would be saying to himself, I have put my hand on its head, and the sacrifice will be accepted as an atonement. They believed God's word, that he was one day going to provide a sacrifice, and in faith they held to that.

[12 : 51] It was their faith in Christ that saved them, exactly as it is faith in Christ that saves now. They may not have seen this clearly, but they believed the teaching and they made the offering by faith.

There was no real sacrifice, until the Old Testament could really deal with sin. All it did was to point forward to the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, as the promised seed of the woman, as the Lamb of God, that was coming and that could really deal with sin.

But faith, in the Lord's testimony, was the ground of an Israelite's peace of conscience. Nothing of it, as we noted last week, rested on his own frame of mind, on his character, or his conduct.

In the days of the tabernacle, the Israelites offered the sacrifice by faith, believing that they were restored to a right relationship with God, by offering a blood atonement on the altar, which was a shadow for them, of the atoning work of Jesus Christ, on the altar of Golgotha.

As we said last week, we are looking at this from the sinners' experience, who are sinners by God's help, make their approach to God. Our sins have to be dealt with, and we see this, how all this is done by all the activities, that took place at the altar, so that we see in the altar of Bont Offering, our justification.

[14 : 37] But connected with the altar, was another vessel, that was to be found in the coat of the tabernacle. It was nearer to the door of the tabernacle, than the altar, and it was called the laver.

We have come to Exodus chapter 13, and there we read, Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash with all. And thou shalt put it between the tabernacle, of the congregation on the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

Just imagine how the priest, with his hands splattered with blood, and his feet soiled from the dust of the tabernacle coat, would move away from the altar, to wash the brazen laver for cleansing.

Although anyone in Israel, could come to the altar of Bont Offering, the laver was provided exclusively, for the priests. Before entering into the tabernacle, to serve, the priest had to wash his hands, and his feet.

Now, if we see in the altar of Bont Offering, our justification, what do we see in the laver? Well, we can see in the brazen laver, our sanctification.

[15 : 55] We have often spoken of the fact that justification and sanctification cannot be separated. Whether it's one, there must be the other. As we have often noted, justification is an act, and sanctification is a work.

Justification is not done by us, but it is done for us, and that by someone else. Sanctification is a process that begins at the very beginning of our spiritual life, when we are justified, and will only be completed and perfect in our glorification.

The desire for holiness is implanted by the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer. However, this desire for personal holiness in this life involves a battle, and this is the process that we studied recently, that Paul speaks of at the end part of his letter to Romans, and chapter 7.

The connection between the two pieces of furniture in the coat of the tabernacle illustrates for us this truth, the connection between justification and sanctification.

Under the ceremonial law, which is what we call the tabernacle laws and rituals, we noted that only the priests could go past the altar of burnt offering.

[17 : 21] Only the priests could partake of the blessings that pertain to the service of God in the tabernacle. Now, I think this is very instructive for us. The Israelite was required to come first to the altar of burnt offering, and then to deliver with its cleansing water.

The altar is free to all. Nothing is necessary for one to approach the altar, but a sense of sin. The Israelite was not required to make himself clean in order to come to the altar, but simply to be aware to have the sense of sin.

In the same manner, we are not required to make ourselves clean in order that we may come to Christ, but we are to come to him in order to be made clean.

There is no room at the altar for anyone to say, I am not fit to come to Christ. It is the very fact of our unfitness that should make us come to Christ.

But mankind has this tendency in them, this desire to do something themselves in order to remove their sin and pollution before coming to Christ.

[18 : 44] But that is to reverse the order that God has given us. It is like the Israelite wanting to come to the labor first before coming to the altar. But God's order is, first the altar, then the labor.

Christ is made of God, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 1, first righteousness, and then sanctification. The Israelite must come to the altar and lean his hand upon the sacrifice which is consumed in the ascending flame, and so we must first come to the altar of Golgotha, to the cross, where Jesus, as the Lamb of God, dies for our sin and as our substitute there.

We must lean our hand of faith upon him. We must become identified with the sacrifice. Now we have noted that only the priests had access to the labor.

when we come to the New Testament, we are told in 1 Peter and chapter 2 regarding believers that they are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, and holy nation, a peculiar people.

There Peter is quoting from Exodus chapter 19 from the words that the Lord spoke to Moses which were given to the children of Israel when he said, Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people, for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an holy nation.

[20 : 33] These are the words which I shall speak unto the children of Israel. Of course, we know that they did not obey the voice of the Lord. And so the priesthood became confined to Aaron and his sons, to the tribe of Levi.

But in the New Testament, we are told there by Peter that all believers through Jesus Christ have been made a kingdom of priests. In Revelation chapter 1, we read, And to him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us king and priests unto God and his Father.

See, what we see here in the first two pieces of the furniture that belonged to the tabernacle is first that the altar was for the sinner, but the laver was for a son.

The altar was for the sinner. The laver was for the priest. The altar was for the sinner. The laver was for the believer.

Now, as we noted, the laver points to our sanctification. The word sanctified means to be set apart.

[21 : 54] In Israel, all those in the priesthood were set apart. And once we accept the atoning work of Jesus Christ, we are justified. And there is a sense in which we are sanctified.

For instance, Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians in chapter 1 that he was writing to those who were sanctified in Christ Jesus called to be saints.

And in chapter 6, he says that believers were washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Theologically, we call this definitive sanctification.

it means our position or standing before God. That position, of course, should lead us to holy living. There is no doubt that the process by which we are transformed more and more to the will of God and the image of Christ is rightly referred to also as sanctification.

Theologically, we call this progressive sanctification. So the laver points us especially to this aspect of our sanctification.

[23 : 10] The washing at the laver was a thing required to be continually repeated. It did not matter how often a priest had to enter the tabernacle.

He must, on each occasion, wash at the laver. That is a requirement not merely for Old Testament Israel, but also for New Testament Israel.

For all believers shall come to serve the Lord. Remember the words of the psalmist in Psalm 26 as he prepared himself to serve the Lord.

I will wash mine hands in innocency. So will I compass thine altar, O Lord. God we have already noted that the word sanctified means to set apart.

And in that sense Jesus could say, and for their sakes I sanctify myself. He was setting himself apart. But we also saw that we can call it definitive and progressive sanctification.

[24 : 13] And this is illustrated to us at the laver. For in Exodus chapter, in the Exodus chapter we read, And Aaron and his sons thou shalt bring into the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and shalt wash them with water.

In Exodus chapter 29. Now that washing that we have there in chapter 29 was only repeated once. that day in which they were set apart into the priesthood.

But daily as they served at the tabernacle they were to wash their hands and their feet. This is also illustrated to us in John's Gospel chapter 13 in the final hours of our Lord's earthly ministry when he washed the disciples' feet.

We are told that when he came to Peter that Peter saith unto him Lord, hast thou washed my feet? And Jesus answered and said unto him what I do thou knowest not now but thou shalt know hereafter.

And Peter saith unto him thou shalt never wash my feet. And Jesus answered him and said if I wash thee not thou hast no part with me. Jesus answered Peter's request he that is washed needeth not to say to wash his feet but is clean every wood.

[25 : 35] He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet but is clean every wood. Another translation is he who is bathed has no need of washing anything except his feet but is clean altogether.

The image brought before his ear is that of a person going to a feast he will bathe at home he will have his bath at home and then when he arrives he only washes feet which have been soiled by the dirty roads and so he can sit at the table wholly clean.

such a person has no need for washing except the washing of his feet. The first washing in the case of Aaron is definitive sanctification.

The first washing here in Jesus' answer to Peter when he says he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet.

The first washing is definitive sanctification. Nevertheless our daily defilements as we travel through a sinful world we need every day as we walk to confess our daily sins and our failures and seek pardon and this is progressive sanctification.

[26 : 51] This is a requirement for us every day as it were to wash our hands and our feet from every defilement that we contract in our walk through a sinful world.

Turning back to the labor it is remarkable that as we study all the pieces of the furniture for the tab and we see the care and precision and accuracy that was to be taken regarding their form and their dimensions and that is true of all the furniture except one and that is the labor.

No account given either to its form or to its dimensions. No reason is given for this omission therefore it is of no value for us to enter into an arena of speculation regarding it.

It is generally however accepted that it must have been circular. that. Moses was also commanded to make a labor of brass and his foot also of brass to wash with all.

The word rendered foot in the AV is rendered stand in the ESV and base in the New King James. I think the New King James gives us a better idea from its rendering the word of space.

[28 : 14] It gives us the impression whatever the shape of the labor that it stood upon another basin that was wider and shallower. It's just like a cup on a saucer.

The labor was to be filled with water and probably there were spouts on the labor which would allow the water to escape into the base or the bottom basin. And therefore the priests could wash themselves of the water that fell from the labor.

If we understand the word foot in our text in this way it certainly makes better sense. To make a labor of brass and a space also of brass to wash with all.

It is not said that the priests were to wash themselves in the labor but at the labor. For Aaron and his son shall wash their hands and their feet there.

They could not wash their hands and their feet if the labor were of any significant type. We are not told how they washed their hands and feet at this labor, only that it was not in the labor or in space.

[29 : 34] Most are inclined to think of the priests either washing themselves with the stream of water as it fell from the spouts of the labor into the base or else using vessels in which they gathered as much water as was needed for the occasion.

However, Moses was commanded to make the labor and his foot or base of brass. And in Exodus chapter 38, they were written, And he made the labor of brass and the foot of it of brass, of the looking glasses of the woman which assembled at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

In the ESV and the New King James version, the word rendered here as looking glasses is translated as mirrors. Now, we know that glass mirrors were not known until the 13th century.

Before that, mirrors and youths were made of brass or of copper and they were highly polished. And the significance of using these mirrors is that they were so highly polished that as the priests approached the labor and its base, they would be aided in discovering every spot and mark that was upon their persons.

And so they were able to have them removed before they entered into the tabernacle. So that we can say that the labor with water was symbolic of the word of God or the truth of God, which can be compared to a mirror, which shows up our deformity and helps us in the removal of it, shows up our spots and our blemishes and our marks, and it helps us in removing them.

[31 : 26] Jesus said, sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth. Jesus said, ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. The writer to the Hebrews, chapter 4, says, for the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing as thunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and as a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

To wash in the word of God is to apply the word to our life. This figure of the word of God being a cleansing agency is brought before us by Paul in Ephesians chapter 5.

Husband, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

The word of God is both likened into the laver itself made of polished brass or copper and into the water contained in the laver.

They are both symbols of the word of God. For the word of God is a sanctifying agency for the children of God. The position of the laver, and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.

[32 : 58] We have said a little about this already, but just to add that the altar stands before us as the symbol of our justification and the laver as the symbol of our sanctification.

At the altar we have Jesus as the Lamb of God dying for our sins. At the laver with its abundant supply of water pointing us to the ministry of the Holy Spirit, in carrying out the work of sanctification of believers.

We know that water is brought before us in the Bible often as a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught this as recorded for us in the Gospel of John chapter 7.

He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. And John adds, but this be a key of the Spirit, which they that believed and should receive.

For the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was yet not glorified. Now we have already referred to the word of the laver as symbolic of the word of God, but we must remember that there is no sanctifying power in the letter of the word apart from the Holy Spirit.

[34 : 14] The laver has a two-fold application. It speaks to us of the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. Because the word of God is sealed to us unless and until the Holy Spirit opens it for us.

The letter of the word is dead, the Holy Spirit maketh it alive. Thus, the word of God cleanses us because it is applied by the Holy Spirit who is the power of the written word.

All animal and vegetable life are dependent on water and its influence. Take water away from nature and it will fall into desolation and death will ensue.

So in the spiritual world, the Spirit is that which quickens and brings life to the desolate soul. And the Holy Spirit uses the word. When Paul speaks of Christ as cleansing or sanctifying the church, he tells us there, as we noted in Ephesians chapter 5, how it is done, that he might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

That means that just as the hands and feet of the priests were cleansed by the washing of water at the laver, so the believer is cleansed by the word as by the washing of water.

[35 : 38] The laver was a symbol for us of the cleansing power of the Holy Spirit and God's word by which the believer as a priest unto God is sanctified and made fit for the service of God.

At the laver as at the altar, we are reminded of the holiness of God. If the blazing fire of the altar reminded us of the holiness of God, so the splashing sounds of the water as it fell from the laver into the base proclaimed loudly as it is written in Hebrews chapter 12, follow peace with all men and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.

For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water that they die not.

Or when they come near to the altar to minister to an offering made by fire unto the Lord, so shall they wash their hands and their feet that they die not. And it shall be a statute forever to them, even to him, and to his seed throughout their generations.

David sums it all up for us, does he not, in Psalm 24. Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place?

[37 : 07] He that hath clean hands and a pure heart, who hath not lifted his soul into vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. Oh, how solemnly speaks to those who go on neglecting the process of cleansing which God has provided, and trusting to anything else to fit them for appearing before God.

No other washing would have sufficed for the priest save that which was conducted at the labor appointed by God to hold cleansing water. If they had thought to cleanse themselves at some other washing place of their own construction instead of the labor, they would have exposed themselves to the judgment of God.

Remember what we read, for Aaron and his son shall wash their hands and their feet their act. When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water that they die not.

the altar was for the sinner, the labor was for a son, the altar was for the sinner, the labor was for a priest, at the altar the punishment due to the sinner was dealt with, at the labor the cleansing required for the child is obtained, the altar spoke of blood, the labor of water.

The altar suggests the scripture which says, without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. The labor points to the scripture, without holiness no man shall see God.

[38 : 48] Scripture says to the sinner, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. the work of cleansing is confined to believers, the priests of God, to the sons of God, to the family of God.

It is for those who have come to the altar, to the cross and who desire to serve and to walk in the light, that is well pleasing to the Lord. Well, where are you tonight?

Are you outside in the court? Are you at the altar? Are you at the labor? The sinner must first come to the brazen altar, which is the cross of Jesus Christ, and the sinner must lean by faith, he must become identified with the sacrifice on the altar, which again is the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as a believer, as a child of God, as a priest unto God, you move to the brazen labor, and you move there for cleansing, you move there for sanctification.

May the Lord bless our thoughts upon his word. Let us pray. We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the provision that thou hast made for us, for the provision of the altar of Golgotha, where the only sacrifice that could deal with sin was offered, in the person of thy son, our Lord and our saviour, Jesus Christ.

[40 : 27] And we give thee thanks, O Lord, for the opportunity and the great privilege that thou hast given to sinners to come and to lean their hand by faith upon the sacrifice, to become identified with the sacrifice, and the great responsibility to move from the altar to the laver, and to receive the cleansing that we all stand in need of.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for the way that thou doth instruct us in thy word, and we pray, O Lord, that we indeed may be assured at this evening hour that we have come to the bracing altar, and that we have gone beyond the altar, and that we have reached the laver, that we know these blessings in our souls, that we are not outside the court, that we are not mere lookers upon those things, but that we have experienced these things for ourselves, to be at the altar, and to be at the laver.

We ask, O Lord, that thou would watch over us in coming days, and now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all, now and forevermore.

Amen.