

Purification From Sin

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[0:00] Zechariah 13. On that day, a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

! On that day, I will banish the names of the idols from the land, and they will be remembered no more, declares the Lord Almighty. I will remove both the prophets and the spirit of impurity from the land.

And if anyone still prophesies, his father and mother to whom he was born will say to him, You must die because you have told lies in the Lord's name.

When he prophesies, his own parents will stab him. On that day, every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision. He will not put on a prophet's garment of hair in order to deceive.

He will say, I'm not a prophet. I'm a farmer. The land has been my livelihood since my youth. If someone asks him, What are these wounds on your body?

[1:05] He will answer, The wounds I was given at the house of my friends. Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me, declares the Lord Almighty.

Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. And I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land, declares the Lord, two-thirds will be struck down and perish.

Yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire. I will refine them like silver and test them like gold.

They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, They are my people. And they will say, The Lord is our God. Well, I'd invite you to turn in your Bibles again to Zechariah chapter 13.

Today's passage begins and ends with two pictures of cleansing, purifying. Verse 1 says, On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

[2:25] There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

It's good news for sinners. God says, I'm going to open a fountain. And how did he open that fountain? What deep place did he dig into to make that water rush out?

Well, verse 7 tells us how he did it. He uses a sword, the sword of judgment. That was his tool to open this fountain.

And then verse 7 also tells us the ground. Where did he dig that fountain out of? It was the man close to him. It was the shepherd of his people.

Jesus was the ground. And the sword of judgment was the pickaxe at which he dug out this well, this fountain. And with the sword, God pierced his friend, his appointed savior, the shepherd, his son, and the fountain burst open.

[3:34] And last week we saw that the water and the blood flowed out. His life flowed out. And Christ laid down his life. And that is the fountain that cleanses sinners from sin and impurity.

Well, that's good news for every sinner. For every sinner. You can be cleansed. It doesn't matter who you are. It doesn't matter what you've done.

God says here is a fountain in which you can be cleansed. And this passage ends with purification. It begins that way and it also ends that way.

In verse 9, you can look at it. He says, I will bring into the fire. I will refine them. I will bring them into the fire. I will refine them like silver and test them like gold.

The picture is a man with some sort of metal ore. And he's going to a smelter. And he's melting down that ore in this blazing hot furnace.

[4:36] But it's not to destroy the metal. Instead, it's to purify. It's to cleanse it. And so when the coals are white hot and the metal is now in the fire, the impurities would actually come out of it.

The silver is cleansed. It is purified. And it's not a superficial cleansing that God is after. It's something deep. It's something. He's not scrubbing the surface. He's putting it into the fire in order to get the very inner, at the deep molecular level, down deep. And when the silver and the gold is refined, it's pure all the way through. Not just surface. Not superficially. All the way down to the bottom. And so what is God doing in those trials in your life? What is he using that pain and that affliction, that fire? What is he doing with those frustrations and those heartaches, that persecution, that oppression? Why is all that hurt there? Well, has he left you?

[5:46] Is he against you? Has his love failed? Has he forgotten mercy? Are you lost? It's easy to begin to head in that direction.

But this passage teaches us that in those moments, God isn't against us. He's against our sin, perhaps. But he's not against us. He's purifying us. He's refining us. He's getting the sin out of us. And I know we would wish that would be an easier way. But there is not an easier way. If there was, our loving Heavenly Father would choose that way. He's making your graces shine all the more. He's making your graces stronger. He's getting the sin out of you. He's drawing you closer to himself. He's making you hold on tighter to him. And just like Pastor John prayed, those are all things that are good about afflictions.

[6:51] It cleanses God's people. It makes them more devoted to him. It makes us more devoted to him. And so Zechariah chapter 13 is about God cleansing his people, cleansing them from sin and impurity, and making them more faithful to him.

Now, you remember chapter 12 and 13 and 14 are all part of one oracle. If you just look at the very beginning of chapter 12, it says an oracle. And that sort of summary statement, that title fits the rest of the book of Zechariah.

And they're all about what God is going to do on that day. It's a phrase that you see repeated again and again and again in chapter 12 and 13 and 14.

That's the theme that's drawing these three chapters together. And what he means by on that day is he's talking about the gospel age. It's talking about that great day of the Lord.

So in the Old Testament, the day of the Lord was this time when God was going to come to earth.

He was going to bring salvation. He was going to bring just judgment.

[8:01] He's going to overturn the world. He's going to set up his kingdom. And the kingdom of God would come to the earth. That's all what's pictured on that great day of the Lord.

And you remember, when Jesus came, he began to preach, the kingdom of God is at hand. He's announcing that this is the dawn of that day that the Old Testament was speaking about.

And so Zechariah 12, 13, and 14, we shouldn't think of purely as some day far, far off in the future. It's going to finish there.

It's going to culminate on that last great day when the Lord Jesus comes in ultimate salvation, in ultimate judgment. But it's even beginning now, right here in this gospel age.

And that's the day that Zechariah is talking about. And he said so far that Jerusalem on that day would be made invincible. The nations won't be able to overcome it.

[9:06] And the church is invincible. It can be cast down, but it cannot be destroyed. And on that day, the nations would break themselves against her.

We have that song that nations come and go. But your church is still praying a thousand years all the same. On that day, God would save his people.

On that day, he would begin to fight against the nations. On that day, they would look at the one they have pierced and mourn. That was last week. This is an age of salvation, but it's also an age of mourning for our sin, for what we have done.

And that's where Zechariah 13 picks up, with that mourning. So God's people are mourning for what they have done. They're saying, my sins.

My sins. This is what I've done. My sins have pierced him. My unfaithfulness has pierced him. And we mourn.

[10:10] Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. But we do mourn, don't we? And our hearts ache for what we've done. And our hearts ache for the way that we have failed to do what we ought to do.

So brothers and sisters, I know that you grieve your sin. You do. The spirit of grace and supplication is in your heart. And you grieve your sin.

The sword pierces your heart. And in our grief, don't we say, how I hate my sin. How I hate my shameful ways. How I hate my dirty deeds.

But God doesn't leave us there. He doesn't leave us in our grief. It is not totally an age of mourning. God doesn't leave us there in our uncleanness, unable to come to him, unable to walk with him, unable to have fellowship with him.

No, instead, he opens a fountain in order that we might be washed and we might walk through that fountain and be cleansed from sin and impurity. And really, the main lesson today is that Christ is that fountain.

[11 : 24] He is that fountain. So I want you to think of that woman who was sick for 12 years in the Gospels. She was physically sick and her physical sickness made her unclean.

She wasn't allowed to come to the temple. She wasn't allowed into the temple precincts because she was unclean. And her sickness was a picture of her sin.

And her sickness was a picture of all of our sin. And so she feels dirty. She feels defiled. She feels desperate.

And you remember that scene that the crowd is all around and she's nudging and scooting her way through in order, and Luke, I believe, tells us what she's thinking.

If I can just touch his garment, if I can just touch his robe, I'll be healed. And she reaches out a hand and in the press of the crowd, she touches his garment.

[12 : 31] And suddenly, Jesus stops because he noticed what happened. Someone's touched me. Someone's touched me and healing and cleansing rushed out.

And what he thinks, he says, someone's touched me. Lord, there's a lot of people here. A lot of people are touching you. And he says, no, someone touched me.

Someone's reached the fountain. Someone's reached for cleansing and has been cleansed. And so Peter didn't get it. The crowd didn't get it. But Jesus understood what happened in that moment.

Someone by faith had touched the fountain. So Peter didn't get it. The crowd didn't get it. But Jesus knew it. And she knew it. And he called her forward. And she came forward and told everything.

And Jesus in response says, daughter, your faith is healed. You go in peace. Jesus is the fountain. Those who touch him by faith are cleansed, are healed. healed. And so now she could go and meet with God.

[13 : 40] It wasn't just that she was physically healed. That was wonderful. But now, she has access to the temple. She doesn't have to go walking around feeling dirty and defiled all the time.

She can feel cleansed and whole and healthy. She's right with God. Her sins are forgiven. Because who, remember Jesus' last words, go in peace.

Who gets that, go in peace? Well, it's those who are justified. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the fountain. So lepers touched him. And he touched them. And instead of them defiling him, he cleansed them. Sinners touched him and they were forgiven.

Demon-possessed men ran into him and they were cleansed of the evil spirits. Adulterous women fell at his feet and went home forgiven. It's like whoever came by faith, wherever he exerted his power, cleansing and healing and forgiveness flowed out.

[14 : 50] And that is what Zechariah is saying. On that day, a fountain will be opened. A fountain unlike any other fountain. And so today, Jesus is still open.

That's the good news. The fountain is still open. It's not a day that's gone. It's a day that is now. It's a day that's here. And there's no gates around the fountain.

There's no limits on the fountain. fountain. This fountain isn't like the public swimming pool. You've seen that sign at the public swimming pool. Please take a shower before you go swimming.

There's no shower before swimming. There's no shower before you get in. One time, Dan and John Wester and I, we did a mudathlon.

And it was a 5K race through the nastiest mud pits and farm creeks and over bales of hay that you've ever seen.

[15 : 51] And just to say, when you're swimming up a farm creek, you're like, what kind of race is this that I'm in? You're just filthy. And when it's done, there's mud everywhere.

There was mud everywhere. And it's stinking, filthy mud. I don't know if there's clean mud, but this wasn't it. And not an inch is clean.

But thankfully, they had jimmy-rigged these outdoor showers right there. And you can go right from the mud pit into the shower. That's the kind of fountain Jesus is.

You get right out of the mud pit and you go to the fountain. You go to the shower. And he's the fountain for the dirtiest. And he's a fountain that doesn't say, please take a shower before you get in.

No, Jesus says, come as you are and be washed. Be washed. Come to the fountain to be cleansed. So Jesus' blood, Jesus' sacrifice, Jesus does what nothing and no one can do.

[16:56] He can wash away sin. He can wash away sin. The biggest problem between God and I, the biggest stain on my heart, the biggest stain on my record, the biggest nastiest mud in my life, he can wash away sin.

Now here's where I want to introduce, maybe introduce to you, two words, two theological words. And they are very important theological words. And so I want you to listen and put this into your thinking.

What does Jesus' death do? What does this fountain do? Well, the first word I want you to know is propitiation. We sing that word in his robes from mine.

We sing propitiation one. And that means it's an appeasing of God's wrath. It's God word. It's God directed.

It has something to do with God's wrath. Now God's wrath is his settled disposition to punish sin wherever he finds it.

[17:59] God's wrath is not his bad mood that he gets into from time to time about sin. It's that settled disposition. It's as much a characteristic of God as his grace is.

It's a manifestation of who he is to punish sin. And yes, it is backed by all of his emotional fury.

They go together. It's so his wrath can be kindled. It can be lit up, so to speak. It is a settled disposition, but there are moments when his emotions back it up and he strikes out to punish sin.

And God's wrath is against all sin. And God's wrath is against all sinners. And we cannot, or it's against sinners outside of Christ. And we, so we cannot say that so simply anyways, we cannot say so simply that God hates sin and loves sinners.

Because there is no impersonal, disconnected from people sin out there. Sin is what sinners do. So I want you to think of a violent, passionate, environmentalist.

[19:10] can they hate the pollution but love that polluting Chinese factory? No. They're one in the same. The one is doing the other.

And so God's wrath is against sinners. He's going to punish sin in the sinner. But Christ's death propitiates, appeases, turns aside God's wrath.

death. So ultimately, we are not saved, ultimately, we are not saved from sin. Ultimately, we are saved from God.

Because Jesus propitiates his wrath. Now, that's the first word. And the other, the other word sounds like it, but it's not the same.

Another aspect of Christ's death is this word, expiation. And it rhymes with propitiation, but it's not the same thing. Expiation is not so much God's, it's not God word.

[20:14] It's now sin word. It's directed toward the sin. It's directed toward sin's defilement. It's the washing away.

It's the blotting out of sin. So it's removed. So it's cleansed. Now, I look good in everything I eat.

And so I know that when you get a stain on something, you need to go get some stain remover and you need to blot it out.

You need to wash it out. And you scrub that stain until it is gone. And that's what Jesus' death does. It's not merely God word.

It cleanses, it cleanses, it removes the defilement of the sin. So here's a fountain that cleanses from sin and impurity, not for a little while, but once for all.

And so, let me just speak to you very personally. Are you cast down? Are you discouraged with a sense of guilt, a sense of dirtiness, a sense of defilement?

[21:30] And maybe you can say, I don't, you don't know what I did. No, I don't know what you've done. But I do know what God says. He says, on that day, I will open a fountain.

He says, whoever confesses their sins, he will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. But you say, it's dark, it's stinking, it's filthy sin. It's filthy mud. And he says, all unrighteousness. And you say, it's unspeakable nastiness. And God says, the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from all sin.

All sin. So, are you taking God at his word? God is serious. He is serious about punishing sin. He is serious about the stain.

And he's just as serious about the cleansing. He's just as serious about the fountain. So, some of you need to get to that fountain.

[22 : 38] right now, right today, you need to get there. You need to get to Jesus. And I don't know why you would wait because you don't have to wait. And I don't know why you would bother cleaning up before you have to go because that's the whole purpose to go.

You don't need to clean up and you don't need to wait. The fountain does the cleansing and so you get to the fountain. That's verse 1. Now, verse 2, he talks about cleansing their whole lives.

It's not just merely that their record is taken care of. He begins working on their hearts. He begins working on their hearts. And he takes their hearts.

He wins their hearts. He purifies their hearts. And so, we can see this purification in their lives. We can see this purification in our lives. It has, it's two steps or three steps.

There's an initial purification where God takes the highest place and that's what we're going to talk about. And then we're going to see he's refining us. He puts us in the furnace to get out that remaining sin.

[23 : 47] And then, thankfully, thirdly, it's not in this passage, but on the last day, and this is actually how chapter 14 ends, it's total holiness. It's total.

It's consummation. It's perfect holiness. But he begins to work in verse 2. He says, I'm going to banish the names of the idols from the land.

He's going to banish the idols. So, what was the sin that pierced God's heart? What was that spiritual adultery? It was this idolatry.

And he says, I'm going to get rid of those idols. I'm going to remove all their foreign lovers, all the people that are taking their hearts, all the gods that are stealing them away from me, and I'm going to take the highest place.

I'm going to banish the idols. So, no more spiritual adultery, no more waywardness. The idols will be gone. And he says, I will take the throne of their hearts and they will love me and they will stay with me and they will be devoted to me, they will cherish me, and I will cleanse them because idolatry defiles.

[24 : 53] Idolatry defiles and idolatry destroys. And God says, I'm going to take out that rotten disease that is in their heart and I will heal them and love them and they will love me.

And that's what God has done for you. Idols used to rule your hearts. They were your lovers and you clung to them.

They were your saviors. They were your lords. They were your masters. And yes, their rule was death. And yes, their love was hate and their salvation was just ruin.

But how we loved them and how we needed them and how we trusted them and how we depended upon them and how we wanted them. But now, the Lord has banished them from our hearts. Yes, they come sneaking around, don't they?

And yes, they, from time to time, get up on the throne and he tears them down. And one day he will finish what he started. But it's not just the idols.

[25 : 56] He removes the false prophets and the spirit of impurity. And this goes, this just, it's all part of the whole. It's all part of this one thing. Idols have their prophets and idols have their spirit of impurity.

And you look around this world and it is like sin has taken a hold of this land. And there is a spirit of impurity. Isn't there?

Everywhere you look, it's a spirit that decays everything. And they call it progress. And it's progress, all right.

It's like rotting meat is progressing. Going somewhere. It's the spirit of impurity and it decays churches and universities and families and people and entertainment and sports and politics.

A spirit of impurity. And God says of his people, I will remove the false prophets. They won't listen to them anymore.

[27:05] They won't have time for them anymore. And the people who said they were false prophets, the people who are practicing false prophets will say and do anything in order to avoid being found out.

Because my people will be turned against them so much. And that's the whole point of them saying, oh, I've been a farmer all my life. That's just an excuse.

And oh, these wounds, these were wounds that I got at my friend's house. Basically saying, I just got really drunk with my friends, but I'm definitely not a false prophet. God says, I'm going to remove that spirit from their hearts.

They're going to be so devoted to me and so against the false prophets and so against the lies. So are there false prophets today? Well, there's religious false prophets and false teachers.

That's for sure. But I think we can widen this out because in a secular culture or an increasingly secular culture like ours, it doesn't mean there's not gods. And it doesn't mean there's not false prophets.

[28:09] They're just not dressed in religious garb. And so are there false prophets today? Sure. Sure. They're college professors. They're high school teachers.

They're friends. They're talk show hosts. They're TV show personalities. They're Hollywood stars. They're marketing agencies. They're government agencies. And all these people talking and talking and teaching and explaining and convincing and arguing.

saying this is right and this is good. This is the way to life. But their words are death. Their words are death. Because the more you believe them, the more you give yourself to what they're saying, the more you die inside and the more you die before God.

And it's death and they're lies. They give promises that they can't keep. The false teachers, God is their belly and they live for money.

They aren't false teachers in the sense of how we would think of religious false teachers. But they are certainly false prophets preaching their gods, claiming their worshipers.

[29:20] and their lies filled our minds. Their lies ruled our hearts and their lies led us astray.

But here God is saying, I'm going to come and cleanse them. I'm going to take the pollution and the lies out of their mind. I'm going to clear their thinking of that dark cloud. Just like Jesus came to the temple and drove out all the money changers.

You see the purity and the devotion that God brings. After God is done, who are these people devoted to? Who are we devoted to? Above all, it's to him.

And so whose words do they cherish now? You can look at verse 3. If anyone still prophesies, his father and his mother to whom he was born will say to him, you must die. Because you have told lies in the Lord's name.

And when he prophesies, his own parents will stab him. Now, Zechariah is echoing a passage in Deuteronomy chapter 13 where God commands the Israelites, or Moses commands the Israelites, if your very own brother or your son or daughter or the wife you love or your closest friend secretly entices you, saying, let us go and worship other gods, show him no pity, do not spare him or shield him.

[30:51] You must certainly put him to death. Your hand, your hand must be the first in putting him to death. Severe.

Extreme. God wants to protect his people from idols and false prophets. And he says, you have to make a decision between them and me. And you choose me.

Now, I don't think there is a record. I don't know. Maybe you could find one. But I don't think there is a record of Israel ever carrying out this command.

In the whole Old Testament, you never see that level of devotion, at least on the corporate, national level, where a husband turns against his wife.

Perhaps there are. But most of the time, it was the other way around. Other way around.

[31:49] The wife comes and says something and the husband goes along with it. The husband says something and the wife goes along with it. The children say, let's worship these gods. And the parents say, okay, let's do it.

But now the fountain has come. And now the day of the Lord is at hand. It's here. But now, if anyone loves father or mother or son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

And some of you, some of you, God has cleansed and he's brought you to Jesus and you are making that decision.

You are making that choice. And you are choosing God over your loved ones. Some of them would rather you not be here. And some of them would rather have you worshipping their gods with them but you say no.

No part of it. Your heart's not there. You don't want it and you say no. Your hearts are steadfast. You are God's people. You are God's people. And you call on him and he answers you.

[32 : 53] And look at how the encouraging way this chapter ends. It says, I will say, they are my people. And they will say, the Lord is our God.

See, this is this beautiful face-to-face relationship, heart-to-heart, life-to-life. They are my people and he is our God. That's what a purified heart does.

It leaves all the idols behind. It leaves the lies behind. And it says, God, you're mine and I am yours. And so here we are, a purified people.

Yes, we're not what we are going to be, but we are not certainly what we were. We are a purified people who God is purifying. We are a one people.

He's won us over and he is winning us over more and more. So what lesson should we learn from all this? Well, I have three. The first is, be encouraged.

[33 : 56] Be encouraged. Are you in a tooth and nail scrapping fight with your sin? Do you feel like you're falling and you're getting dirty a lot? There's a fountain for you.

There's a fountain for you. You don't have to stay dirty. Jesus Christ stands open for you. It's a fountain of sin and impurity. And so you get up from your sin and you get to Jesus.

And you don't wait and you don't shower before you get into the fountain. He's there to cleanse you. And if you didn't need him, he wouldn't be there. But God knew that we were going to need a fountain.

And so he said, I'm going to open a fountain for you. So be encouraged. Satan loves for Christians to feel dirty all the time. After a fall, he loves to put his thumb on you and keep you down.

But faith rises up and says, yes, that's all true, but Jesus. Yes, I've sinned, but Jesus. He's a fountain for me.

[34 : 58] So be encouraged. Secondly, that's the gospel message. There's no reason that you can't be saved. That's the gospel message.

There's no reason you can't be washed. His death can wash the phallus clean. His blood was enough. It availed for me. So are you dirty?

Are you guilty? Do you need cleansed? Well, his blood is enough. His fountain, this fountain is enough. So how are you, how are you coping?

My unsafe friend, how are you coping with your guilty conscience? Because we don't have to pretend like you don't have one. So how are you coping with it?

Maybe you're just burying it deep, pushing it down. Maybe you're burying it under a busyness and work. Maybe you're burying it under video games and YouTube.

[36 : 02] Maybe you're burying it under food, medicating yourself. Maybe it's under pornography. Undercutting. Anything to feel in control.

Anything to feel on top of the pain. To make the pain stop, the shame stop, to find the acceptance that you're looking for. But what you are looking for, where God smiles at you and you smile back, and where he says, this one is mine, and you say, and you are mine.

That cleansing and that acceptance, that's what you're looking for. It's here. It's in Jesus Christ. It's in this fountain. And so if you come to him and you come dirty and you say, I need washed.

I need forgiven. He'll say what he said to that woman. Go in peace. Go in peace. Justified.

Right with God. Washed. Think about how that woman went away. I would have loved to see her the next day. Forgiven once for all. So this is the gospel message in third, and this is where we end.

[37 : 21] If God has made you pure, if God is making you pure, if that's the point of the trials, if that was the point of the cross, then live pure lives.

In Galatians 5, Paul says, it was for freedom that Christ set you free. And so I want to take that idea. It was for freedom that Christ set you free. And put it like this. In the same way, it was for purity that Christ died.

So live a pure life. If God has set you free, then don't go back to the slavery. If God has cleansed you, then live for purity. He washed you so that you would be his.

So be his. He washed you to have your heart and your soul and your face and his face looking upon each other. So be his.

Give him your heart. Give him your body. Don't let the idols defile your heart. And don't let sexual sin defile your body.

[38 : 32] It's for purity that God has made you pure. And so don't go living in the filth again. You're not a pig. You're a child of God. So you get out of the mud and you come into the house.

You're God's son. You're God's daughter. God struck his son to purify you. And so let's live pure lives.

Let's remove all the things that defile and walk with him. Let's pray. Our Heavenly Father, we do want to do that.

Will you give us grace to put our sins to death? Give us grace to take up the knife, to gouge out the eye and to cut off the hand.

Give us grace to get out of the mud, to not stay in it. But when we fall, to get up and to believe what you say.

[39 : 41] Lord, I pray that you would not let Satan keep anyone here from Jesus Christ. That you would not let him distract and confuse anyone to keep them from Jesus.

But that everyone, whether for the first or the thousandth time, that we would come to Jesus to be washed and to be cleansed. Thank you that you have washed us, that it is our right and it is our privilege to see ourselves as justified in your sight, to be right with you, to be yours.

And so if that is what you've done for us, then help us to live devoted, 100% lives for you, zealous for you, loving you, committed to you.

So I pray for salvation and I pray for holiness. I pray that you would so honor Jesus and so fulfill the ends of the cross.

Jesus died in order to save, so save, Lord. And Jesus died in order to cleanse and so cleanse.

Cleanse us from our sin and from our waveredness and help us to love you with all that we are.

[41 : 08] We ask this in his name and for his sake and his honor. Amen. that.