



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

Flushing the System: A Picture of Sanctification

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1 JOHN 1:9; 2 CORINTHIANS 7:1; EPHESIANS 4:22-24

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All of us in the Charleston area and the surrounding counties affected by the chemical spill and the resulting water ban have faced some unaccustomed challenges over the last week. In the days to come there will certainly be much discussion as to the blame and liability for the incident and what can be done to assure such an event will not happen again. There will likely be several pieces of legislation introduced dealing with this issue. We will leave all of those discussions for another setting. In this study we will draw some biblical lessons from what I believe is a powerful illustration of an important truth in the lives of all those who seek to follow Christ.

All of us under the ban have been eagerly awaiting the news that our area is now safe and we can begin the process of flushing the water systems in our homes. Companies and agencies have worked hard to assure no more contaminate is entering the water. The water company has labored to see that water leaving their plant is clean, and it is safe in the various zones to begin using the water. Now it is up to every business and individual to use a process to clean the contaminate from their own water lines.

It is often helpful for us to use an illustration to help us better understand a biblical truth. Paul often used the illustrations of soldiers and athletes to help us understand how to live the Christian life. Let us consider the water emergency, or “aquageddon” as some have called it, as an illustration to help better understand what Christ has done for us and how He works in our lives.

JUSTIFICATION AND SANCTIFICATION

There is a fundamental mistake that many make about religion in general and the Christian faith in particular. If you ask them what it means to be religious or to be a Christian their answer will likely be that you must try to be a good person. You need to try to do good, love others, and follow the teachings of Christ in order to be right with God. However, the message of the Christian faith is that we are not good people. We are all sinners and we can never be good enough nor do enough good things to offset the guilt of our sin and make us right with God. That is why Christ came to live a perfect life and suffer and die on the cross. He took the punishment for our sin

upon Himself so that our sin could be forgiven and His goodness credited to us. This is what the Bible calls *justification*. Someone has well described justification as *God seeing us as just as if we had never sinned and just as if we have always obeyed* – all based on the work Christ has done on our behalf. This is what takes place when we repent and put our faith in Christ.

Of course the Christian life will involve striving to be a good person, seeking to do good, loving others, and following the teachings of Christ. This is all only as a result of being right with God and the change God has made in our lives, not something we do in order to make ourselves right with Him and earn His favor. As Jonathan Edwards said (see our previous study), when we truly understand the glory and holiness of God, our own sinfulness, and the amazing truth of what Christ has done for us, our heart and affections will be moved and our lives will be changed. This is an ongoing process as we continue to grow in our understanding of who Christ is and what He has done for us. This process the Bible calls *sanctification*. Though we are considered righteous in God’s eyes, we still deal with remaining sin in our lives. Sanctification is a progressive work of God and man that makes us more and more free from sin and like Christ in our actual lives.¹

It is vital that we understand the difference between justification and sanctification. Let us briefly consider how the water emergency might help us understand the difference and we can become more like Christ in our daily lives.

CLEAN AT THE SOURCE – CHRIST IS THE LIVING WATER!

If nothing else, the water emergency has reminded us how important clean water is and how much we take it for granted. This immediately reminds us that Christ is vital as the only source of our spiritual life. He is described as the “living water” in the Bible. He told the woman at the well, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” Jesus goes on, “...Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life.” *John 4:10, 13-14*

BIBLE STUDIES

LOBBYIST / STAFF STUDY: **TUESDAYS, 12:00 NOON**, TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

LEGISLATOR / ELECTED OFFICIAL STUDIES: **THURSDAYS NOON** TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

Flushing the System: A Picture of Sanctification

We have been reminded how dependant we are upon the water company to provide us clean water. We are totally dependant upon Christ alone to provide us the living water necessary for eternal life.

OUR WORK AND GOD'S WORK

Let us first look at two passages of Scripture:

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.
1 John 1:9-10

Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
2 Corinthians 7:1

As we read through the Bible, it is a good habit to take note of questions our study might raise. The question here is, who does the cleansing? In the first, it is God that does the cleansing. In the second, we are to cleanse ourselves. This passage points us to the difference we pointed to earlier between justification and sanctification. Justification is the work of God in providing for us the Living Water, cleansing us from the guilt of our sin. Sanctification is the work we do in partnership with God to cleanse the ongoing "contaminants" (sin) in our lives. As we read through the Bible it is important we keep the difference of these truths in mind. Hopefully, we now have clean water coming from the source. We now must "flush the system" in order to have clean water in our homes. What can this illustration teach us about the process of sanctification in our lives?

Our baseline for sin is zero ppm. Officials have determined that 1 part per million is a safe level of MCHM in our water. We have flushed our system and there is still a strong odor. We do not plan on drinking or cooking with it for a while. I want to see zero ppm of any contaminate in my water. That should be our view of sin. Our baseline is the holiness of God and we should seek to rid ourselves of any sin in our lives. Paul said we should seek to cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit.

A Residue of Sin Remains in Our Lives. Even though the water is now clean coming into the system, a residue of the chemical remains in each home and business. Even though we may have found forgiveness and cleansing of our sin through repentance and faith in Christ, there is a residue of sin that remains we call remaining or indwelling sin. This is the "defilement of our flesh and spirit" of which Paul writes. This is something with which we must deal on a daily, even moment by moment basis.

Detecting the Contaminants of Sin in Our Lives. One of the distinguishing characteristics of MCHM which all of us have discovered is its strong odor, even in very small amounts. With as little as .1 ppm the odor will still be detectable in our water. How is it that we can discover the presence of sin in our lives? It is when we consider the perfect holiness of Christ that we become aware of the sinfulness in our own lives. It is when we compare ourselves with Him instead of others we detect the detestable odor of the sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions. It is when we study the Bible that the God works to make us aware of the sin we need to flush from our lives. Many have talked of how the water company should have known about the possible contaminants likely to cause problems with the system. Each of us should be aware of the particular sins to which we are susceptible in our personal lives and in life at the capitol.

Sanctification is a Process. The water company gave us a process for flushing the system in our home. Growing in holiness is a process. God has given us a process for growing in holiness and Christ likeness: **"...In reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, ²³ and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ²⁴ and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth."** Ephesians 4:22-24

In the water emergency we had to stop the intake of the contaminant, flush it out of the system, and replace it with clean water. Here Paul describes the sanctification process as laying aside the old self (the sinful thoughts and actions), renewing our minds, and then putting on the new self (the good and holy thoughts and actions). Paul is describing how we can "flush the system" in order to remove the contaminants of sinful thoughts, attitudes, and actions in our lives.

CONCLUSION

- **HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE CLEANSING AND FORGIVENESS OF SIN WHICH ONLY GOD CAN PROVIDE THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN CHRIST?**
- **MAY WE WHO HAVE TRUSTED CHRIST SEEK TO "FLUSH THE SYSTEM" AND GROW IN HOLINESS AND CHRISTLIKENESS EACH AND EVERY DAY.**

¹ Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine.* Zondervan Press. 1994. P. 746.