



guidelines for living

a 5 minute message

March 28, 2018

CLEANSING FOR ALL

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow. Psalm 51:7

Shortly before Boris Yeltsin came to the United States to ask for aid, he attended church, something which politicians occasionally do, especially when the press covers it. But Yeltsin later told the ITAR-Tass news agency, "I came here today to undergo cleansing...." What struck me about Yeltzin's actions and his comments was the fact that he is an avowed atheist, at least he says that he is. But deep down in his heart, is he really? One does not usually talk about chocolate cake unless you believe that there is a cook in the kitchen. Nor do you talk about God unless you believe He exists.

Ronald Reagan, speaking before a prayer breakfast, once said, "I have long been unable to understand the atheist in this world of so much beauty. And I've had an unholy desire to invite some atheists to a dinner and then serve the most fabulous gourmet dinner that has ever been concocted and, after dinner, ask them if they believe there was a cook."

Some atheists attend church, though not many. But when we talk of cleansing, we speak of that which only God can do. Long before Yeltsin, Paul spoke of the cleansing which God's Holy Spirit does in our lives. He said, "... Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25-26).

It is said that there are no atheists in foxholes, and that may well be true. But I do know one thing for a fact. Quite often people say they believe or disbelieve something to be socially acceptable. But when the moment of truth comes and the stark reality of eternity confronts a person, that person suddenly wants to know that God has forgiven him or her. And when that happens, atheists get on praying terms with God.

That need for cleansing and forgiveness is a universal one. No individual, no matter how good a father or how many civic causes he supports, or how much good he does, is so perfect that at some time or another he does not need cleansing and forgiveness. True, we sin against others and must learn to seek forgiveness and extend it as well, but ultimately the issue is between the individual and his Maker.

When David took Bathsheba as his wife, he began to compound the wrong which he initially did. Adultery eventually led to plotting the death of Bathsheba's husband. David later sought what Yeltzin was searching for: cleansing and forgiveness, but he paid a high price for his failure.



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Psalm 51, in the Old Testament, records the beautiful prayer of David, who cried out, "Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin."

David knew that he had sinned against Bathsheba in violating her when she was another man's wife. He knew he had sinned against Uriah, the husband of Bathsheba, in ordering his death; but he also recognized that his great wrong was against God, for he cried out, "Against you [God], you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4). No wonder David plead: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51:7).

There is good news, friend. What David sought is what God still dispenses today. He's still in the business of washing away the filth and off-scouring of the world. To find cleansing and forgiveness, you need only ask for it.

Resource reading: Psalm 139:1-24