

EZEKIEL 36

CLEANSED AND PURIFIED!

This chapter is the continuation of the great theme that the prophet has been pursuing in the last few chapters – namely, Israel’s prospective revival and prosperity as the Lord’s covenant-people. But here it speaks of this under different aspects. In the first section (verses 1-15), the prophet unfolds the essential distinction between Israel and their heathen neighbors; for the former had what the others had not – namely, an interest in the power and faithfulness of God. And because they had this in possession, Israel’s heritage must revive and flourish, while the hopes of the heathen must be disappointed. In the next section (verses 16-21), we are given the reason why the Lord, for a short time, had acted toward His land and His people as if their connection with Him was an evil rather than a blessing. It was traced up to the incorrigible wickedness of the people, and the necessity of God’s vindicating the cause of His holiness by exercising upon them the severity of His displeasure. Then, in verses 22-32, the Lord’s intentions for their future good are revealed. For His own name’s sake, He would revive His cause among His people – and He would do this in the most effectual manner, by first renewing their hearts to holiness, and then by restoring them to a flourishing condition outwardly. And the chapter concludes with a short summary (verses 33-38) of the general impressions which all of this would produce upon the minds of others.

The Lord assures His people in this chapter that they would be cleansed and purified, and given a new heart of flesh. And in these assurances, as well as the rich and encouraging promises of good things to come in a physical sense, there was a very strong assertion as to the grounds upon which God’s interference for Israel was to proceed; it was not on their own account, but on account of His own name, which they had profaned. Looking simply to their conduct, the Lord could only find reasons for continued severity in His dealings with them; and they themselves ought to have exhibited profound humiliation and silent shame. Therefore, the axe was here laid at the root of all self-righteous boasting and fleshly confidences. The prophet disclosed the utter absence of any personal claim that they might have desired to have upon the Divine goodness; and he showed that no matter what they might experience, it must proceed from the upper spring of God’s own grace and righteousness. It was in Himself alone that the Lord could find the motive of benevolent action. And while this laid all human merit in the dust; it also opened up, at the same time, a rich ground of consolation and hope – such as could not be found in any fleshly confidence. For

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ *The great distinction between God’s people and the heathen – verses 1-15*
- ❖ *The reasons for His people’s afflictions – verses 16-21*
- ❖ *Promises of purification and blessing, for the Lord’s name’s sake – verses 22-32*
- ❖ *The impression this would make on those who saw it – verses 33-38*

it carried the humble heart of faith above the very sins and backslidings which had caused the judgments of heaven to alight upon them; and it presented to them a source of life and blessing, which even these could not stanch. And need we say that just as this was the only hope of Israel back then; so also now, it is the one fountain-head of all the salvation that is experienced by the Christian? “Not by works of righteousness, which we have done; but by his mercy, he saved us” – that is the truth which is written upon the threshold of faith, and which must pass into the experience of every sinner as he enters therein. And as mortifying as this is to human pride, yet it provides the only solid and abiding peace for those who have rightly come to know the evil of sin. Hereby we exchange the vanity of a human hand for the infinite sufficiency of a Divine one, and the feebleness of an arm of flesh for the all-prevailing might of Omnipotence. When people thus enter with their very hearts into the righteousness of God, all the peculiar blessings of the covenant become their portion. God vindicates the glory of His name, by first forming His people to the possession of His own holiness; and then by treating them, as thus renewed and sanctified, to the richest outward tokens of His favor and goodness.



As we read this chapter full of sweet promises, let us adore the riches of that free and sovereign grace by which those promises are bestowed upon the people of God, through the finished salvation that is in Jesus! Surely the Gospel was never more fully preached than it is here! Truly, we have reason indeed to be ashamed and confounded for all our sins, and to detest ourselves in our own sight. But in the sovereign salvation of the Lamb, we can and will rejoice! It is for the Lord’s own name’s sake that mercy is shown to us, although we have rebelled against Him. All praises forever be to His redeeming love and grace; for in His dear Son’s merits, blood, and righteousness, He has procured more glory and honor to His great name than could have been done by the everlasting and unsinning obedience of men and angels to all eternity! And is not the Church more lovely when she is sprinkled clean from all her filthiness and all her idols by the blood of the Lamb, than she could have been if she had never been polluted? Is not the Church more beautiful when beheld by our God in the holy garments of Christ’s righteousness, than she ever could have appeared in His sight in any righteousness of her own – even if she had never polluted herself from the original righteousness in which she was first created? Surely the holiness of the Church in her glorious Head is more blessed to His view – now washed, cleansed, and adorned as a bride for her husband – than in any garment short of Jesus’ robe of salvation!

Lord Jesus, we confess and mourn our uncleanness and our sins, but we thank You that we may be cheered by Your assurance of purification and cleansing! Amen.