

“The Once and Done Dirt Remover”

Hebrews 9:11-15, 23-28

Series: Unlimited Access

Week 4. Hope has a Price: Jesus Fully Paid for Your Admission

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Years ago I installed a vinyl floor in my kitchen. The maker of this flooring recommended a floor cleaner, which to my utter surprise, was also made by them. It's called “**Once ‘n Done** Floor Cleaner – The Professional's Choice.” Now I have a bone to pick with these people. I rigorously cleaned the floor with the product. It sparkled and shined. But then, about a week later, it was dirty again. The package said, “Once ‘n Done.” They promised I would only have to clean the floor once and I'd be done for the rest of my life. This is clearly a case of false advertising. I complained to my wife about this terrible injustice. She just handed me a bucket.

When I looked at the bottle again it said, “For Tough Spots: Use Full Strength.” So this time I flexed my muscles and scrubbed my knuckles to the bone. But it still got dirty. Lisa pointed out that “Full Strength” means don't dilute the cleaner. Oh! The next time I almost passed out from the fumes but it worked. Every tough spot was clean! Unfortunately, the rest of the floor still looked dirty. I hoped Lisa wouldn't notice. She just handed me the bucket.

This time, I concentrated on the traffic pattern where everyone leaves dirty footprints. Now a bright path traversed the floor but the rest still looked dingy. Cap'n Crunch crumbs and dust bunnies multiplied in the corners. I tried to convince Lisa it would be okay to let the dirt collect. No one would notice and we'll get used to it. We are striking a blow for the environment – let nature take its course. She told me if I wanted to live outside that was fine. She promised to visit me occasionally.

So I kept cleaning the floor over and over. And it did sparkle – a little. Until I became aware of a new problem. No matter how many times I scrubbed with “Once ‘n Done” there was still something I couldn't remove – scratches. Years of dragging chairs across the vinyl left countless scars in the surface. Dirt, embedded in those crevices, was impossible to remove. Once ‘n Done? They were right: Once it's scratched, it's done. My floor would never look new again. [At this point the management of my house compels me to inform you that this story is for illustration purposes only and in no way reflects my actual participation in household cleaning.]

Cleaning floors is one thing. Cleaning your soul is something else. And yet the two are not as far apart as you think. Over the years, I've seen similar approaches when it comes to wiping away the dirt in your soul.

Wash Only What Meets the Eye – To all outward appearances you are spotless. You may even impress people. But inside there are dark corners where sin collects and like mold, grows wild. Pretty soon, the separation between the outside and inside leads to a double life. And the distance between the two keeps growing.

Scrub the Tough Spots – Pour all your will power into stopping the worst problems. Give it your full strength. Unfortunately, once you clean one spot, another appears. You give up one habit only to have another replace it. Solve one addiction and two take its place. Peel back one problem and discover it's covering a worse one.

Take the Natural Approach – You give into your desires and justify them by saying they are natural, even God-given. You indulge them and wallow in them. You ignore the mess. It's not as bad as what other people do. But like an abandoned house, the "natural approach" leads to disintegration, dilapidation and even destruction.

Let Someone Else Clean It – You expect the other people in your life to clean up your messes. You depend on them to make excuses for you, pay for your mistakes, and protect you from the consequences of your actions. This may last for awhile but eventually your loved ones get tired of doing your dirty work.

The Once 'N Done Method – Maybe if you have a spectacular conversion experience, you are set for life and eternity. Once you are "saved" you never need to do another thing. Some think they can live the way they want and give their life to Jesus with their last breath.

Wash, Rinse, Repeat – On the other hand, you may believe an endless cycle of worship services, religious rituals, good deeds and offerings will cleanse your soul and make you acceptable to God. The religions of the world depend on this method but it's a heavy burden with generous helpings of guilt.

We continually try to clean our souls. Yet years of scrubbing only go so far. All the spic and span can't erase the scratches and scars accumulated over the years. Some of these wounds were carved into us by others. Some we earned all on our own. All this dirt keeps us from getting closer to the Lord. Sin blocks our access to a Holy God. Just as light casts out darkness, God's holiness obliterates and destroys sin and anything containing sin – including us. That's why we had no access to God.

In our tour through the Book of Hebrews we've seen how the Israelites cleansed the dirt and sin from their souls under the first or Old Covenant. The Preacher says, "Now the first covenant had regulations for worship and also an earthly sanctuary" (Hebrews 9:1). As we've seen these regulations required a continuous cutting and sacrificing of animals on the altar to wash away their sins. All this was done on the altar outside the "earthly sanctuary" - first the Tabernacle and later the Temple - which was a copy of heaven. The Preacher of Hebrews says:

The priests entered regularly into the outer room to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. Hebrews 9:6-7

Even the endless offering of sacrificial animals couldn't wipe away all the sin of the people. So, as we saw, once a year, on Yom Kippur – the Day of Atonement, the High Priest sacrificed a bull. The bull's blood was carried through the curtain into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled on the Ark of the Covenant. This was to cleanse the sins of the High Priest and the whole priesthood. Then a goat was sacrificed for the sins of the people and sprinkled on the Ark. So, for another year, the people were atoned or at-one with God.

But this was not a “Once ‘N Done” washing. They still needed to offer sacrifices and to do this whole ritual again next year. And above all, they still could not enter the Holy of Holies. They still did not have unlimited access to God. Why? Because the sacrifices only dealt with individual sins, it did not cleanse the inner conscience, our sinful nature. Hebrews says this:

This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper. They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings—external regulations applying until the time of the new order. Hebrews 9:9-10

The blood of animals paid the price for their sins. It washed away the dirt which stood between God and His people. But it had to be done over and over again.

But could there be a way to atone, to make God and His people “at-one” for all time? Could there be a way to bring not just the High Priest but all the people through the curtain, back stage, into the Holy of Holies, into the very presence of God? Could there be a way to give us unlimited access to God? Could there be a way to cleanse sin once and for all, to finally be “Once ‘N Done”?

Yes! But not without a price. And that price would be paid in the most surprising, amazing way. It would not be paid with the blood of a bull, a goat, or a lamb. It would not be paid by just any High Priest. It would not be paid in the Temple. It would not be paid in the earthly Holy of Holies. And it would not be paid over and over again. None of these were a way. When God combined them all in one person they became *the Way*, *the Truth* and *the Life*. Hebrews says this:

When Christ came as high priest...He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Christ would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Hebrews 9:11-12, 24-26

This is not just any high priest, He is *the* High Priest – the Son of God Himself. This is not just blood from lambs it is blood from *the* Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He does not enter an earthly tabernacle, a copy of heaven, Jesus enters *the* Holy

Temple of Heaven. He does not go through a curtain into an earthly Holy of Holies but into the very throne room and presence of the Holy God. And He doesn't offer the sacrifice of His life over and over again, year after year. When His blood is poured out on the Cross, He washes away all our sin for all eternity. This is why, at the moment Jesus dies, the curtain of the Temple, covering the Holy of Holies, is torn in two (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). He pays the price to give us unlimited access to God. His sacrifice on the Cross is the only true, "Once 'N Done" dirt remover.

The question for you now is this: Will you let His blood wash away your sin? This sounds easier than it is. First you have to **Admit**. Are you willing to admit that you have sin in your life? Are you willing to admit you need a Savior? Then **Believe**. Will you believe Jesus can wash it away? Do you doubt He loves you? Do feel you are unworthy? Do you fear He won't forgive you? Are you willing to lay aside your doubts, shame, guilt and regrets and let Him embrace you? Will you **Commit**? Are you willing to surrender every attempt to save yourself, to prove you are good, to earn your salvation? He loves you unconditionally. Will you unconditionally commit your life into His hands. And finally will you **Do**? Will you daily do His will? Are you willing to daily surrender your life and let Him lead you closer to the Father until that day He takes you home? You don't *have* to do His will to earn salvation. You *get* to do His will. Let Him in. His blood doesn't just clean on the surface. It goes down into the deepest crevices, scratches and scars of your soul. His blood is the only "Once 'N Done"

Dr. Samuel Weinstein is the chief of heart surgery at the Children's Hospital at Montefiore Medical Center in New York. In May 2006, he traveled to El Salvador with Heart Care International to provide life-saving operations for poor children. It would, however, take more than his expertise to save the life of 8-year-old Francisco Fernandez.

Dr. Weinstein and his team began operating on Francisco's heart shortly before noon. Twelve hours later, the procedure took a deadly turn. "The surgery had been going well, but he was bleeding a lot and they didn't have enough medicines to stop the bleeding," Weinstein said. "After a while, they were running out of his rare type B-negative, which is present in only 2 percent of the population.

As it was, the only person in the room with B-negative blood was Dr. Weinstein. Knowing what he had to do, he stepped down from the operating table. As his colleagues continued their precision work, Dr. Weinstein, one of the most skilled doctors in the world, set aside his scalpel and gave away his blood.

When he had given his pint, Dr. Weinstein drank some bottled water, ate a Pop-Tart and he rejoined his colleagues. As his own blood circulated into the boy's small veins, Dr. Weinstein completed the operation that saved Francisco's heart—and his life.¹

Let the blood of the Great Physician, Jesus, flow in you.

¹ Jim Fitzgerald, "Doc Stops Surgery to Give Own Blood to Patient," LiveScience.com (5-26-06).