

5/24/18

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

For over a decade, I, along with a bunch of pastors and sons would camp in Box Canyon, MT. Box Canyon is located 50 miles south of Big Timber and is at 7,000 feet above sea level. There is no running water. We camped next to the Boulder River. There was an outhouse. That's it. We would camp up there for 4-5 days and then come down to civilization. On the way home, we would stop at a McDonalds in Glendive, MT. We would go in and get something to eat. When we would order, the person taking our order would stand as far back as they could and use a pencil to punch in our orders because we had a certain eye-watering fragrance about us because we hadn't washed for all those days up in the mountains. Yes, we smelled horrible and were filthy, but not as filthy as described in a book about the Civil War.

In his Civil War book, "Glory Road," author Bruce Catton shows us how dirty a human being can get. He recounts an episode in which a soldier leaves a prisoner-of-war camp to rejoin his old unit. His time as a POW had left him filthy beyond description. He asks his comrades to help him get clean. They take him into a river, strip off his clothes and begin to wash and scrub. Only after this continues for a time do the man and his friends realize that he is still wearing an undershirt. The man's body had become so encrusted that it had been impossible at first to tell the difference between a soiled piece of clothing and his own skin.

The soiling nature of sin does the same thing. From the dark thoughts we allow to fester in our minds to all the deeds of love conveniently left undone, sin does more than leave a dirty streak here and there on our souls. It makes us spiritually filthy beyond description. Left to ourselves, our hearts are so encrusted by sin that it's impossible for us to see how lost we really are, how deep the pit really is.

*Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life.
Revelation 22:14*

That's where Jesus comes in. We didn't see how lost we were. But he did. We didn't see how far we had fallen. But he did. He took us to the river of his grace. He washed us in the waters of baptism. He cleansed us in the blood he shed on Calvary's cross. Now we stand before him in robes of white. Now, through faith in him, his forgiveness is our personal possession.

There are moments when the same old stench from the same old sinful habits can fill our nostrils with despair. When such a moment comes for you, remember who you are. Remember what Jesus has done. He has gone to the cross to wash you clean. He has risen from death to assure you that not one of your sins remains. Through his eyes your life is fresh and clean and new. Your days as a filthy prisoner are long gone.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, in those moments when I stumble and the stench of my old sinful habits fills the air, remind me of the washing I have in you. Fill me with your peace. Empower me to get back up and to walk again with you. Amen.*

(WELS E-Devotion, adapted)

...See you in worship.

Keep looking up because the Lord is always looking down – Psalm 121

Pastor Alan W. Gumm

Phone: 630-947-4317 - revagumm@hotmail.com