

Create in Me a Clean Heart Part 1

Sin and Our Sin Nature

Key Verse

*If we confess our sins,
He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins
and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

1 John 1:9 (NASB77)

Today's Portion for the Journey

We have been studying God's call to come close to Him. Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and it is impossible for us to have a relationship with God unless we place our faith in Jesus Christ and His salvation. We are eternally separated from Him unless we accept the way that He has provided for us to be saved. It is important that we have a full understanding and application of these spiritual principles, not only for our own lives, but to be able to share them with others! These principles are not just for the "day we are saved," but need to be a guiding principle to how we live our life as we "take up our cross, and follow Him" each and every day.

Carl Menninger, one of the most highly respected leaders in the field of psychiatry wrote a book called, "Whatever Happened to Sin?" He concluded that most mental health issues are really related to unresolved sin in a person's life. But we are living in a society where sin is not in the vocabulary of most people. There are even Christian teachers who falsely teach that people are all basically good and deny that we are born with a sin nature. This is not what the Bible teaches!! One of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith is that we are all born with a sin nature and that we are all sinners, hopelessly lost without hope. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus died to save us from our sins, and that when we believe in Jesus, God will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. He will make us to be brand new with a new nature! His nature!! Repentance is a key to our receiving God's forgiveness.

It is important that we understand this most foundational doctrine, because having a clear understanding of original sin, and God's provision for our freedom will help us to discern many false teachings that will circumvent God's ways and try to make us "good" apart from God. This teaching will also protect us from Satan's accusations when he tries to make us feel condemned and unworthy. The message of the Bible really is Good News!!

One of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith is that we are all born with a sin nature and we are all sinners, totally lost and without hope apart from God. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus died to save us from our sins, and that when we believe in Jesus, God will forgive us for our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. This in itself seems like very good news, but something even more incredible happens when we believe and trust in Jesus as our Savior! He actually remakes us, so that we are new creations in Him and promises us a place in His Kingdom forever! Faith in Jesus is the door to walking in new life. Confession and repentance is a key to our receiving God's forgiveness and continual cleansing.

It is important that we understand this principle of how to have a clean heart in order to apply it on a consistent basis in our life. So, let us turn to the Word to see what this message of the Good News of the Gospel is all about!!

Digging Deeper in the Word

As I have studied the Word, I came to realize something that I had believed regarding sin which was wrong and led me into a form of self-righteousness that was like the Pharisees. As I grew up, I had compiled a list of things that are wrong and thought that as long as I did not do those things, I was OK. For example, ... it was wrong to drink alcohol, wrong to play cards, wrong to dance. Movies were very questionable. Of course, there were bigger sins, such as lying, adultery and murder that were obviously big no-no's. So I felt pretty good about myself because I was doing pretty good at keeping away from the things on my list. But as I read the Word, I began to realize that my view of sin and what pleases and displeases the LORD is not as simple as a list of do's and don'ts. Many things that we do all the time are sin ... like not trusting the LORD, worry, putting other things ahead of Him, having an unforgiving heart, gossiping, etc.

The LORD showed me that sin is not as much about a list of what is right and wrong as it is in not keeping our hearts right with Him. Having a right heart is not following a list rules for what we can or cannot do, but seeking Him, loving Him and in all ways to walk in a manner pleasing to Him because we love Him so much. Apart from Jesus this would be impossible. But with Jesus, and the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in us, it is very possible to lead a life pleasing to God. This comes from being in relationship with Him, seeking Him in His Word, and being passionately desirous of doing nothing that would separate us from our LORD. We will make mistakes and get it wrong, but the Holy Spirit will show us when we are sinning, and we can confess our sin and receive His cleansing. As we study the Word of God in relation to having a clean heart, we need to understand the place that the blood of Jesus has in our cleansing! The more we understand these concepts, the more filled with joy we will be in our relationship with Him. God is not so much blessed by the length of our list, but by our desire to find out what is pleasing to Him and our obedience to His will.

1. Read through the following verses. As you read, consider the following questions:

- What life principles are taught in these verses?
- How did God accomplish salvation for a lost world?
- Who has He done it for?
- What specifically sets us free from our sin and makes it possible for us to have eternal life with the Father?

Romans 3:23-24 (NLT) For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet now God in his gracious kindness declares us not guilty. He has done this through Christ Jesus, who has freed us by taking away our sins.

Romans 6:23 But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NASB77)

John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Rev 3:20-21 (NASB) `Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. `He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.

Hebrews 9:13-14 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (NASB)

1 John 1:8-9 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and *yet* walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (NASB77) NOTE: 1 John 1:9 tells us that cleansing comes through the confession of sin. The word for confess that is used in this passage is "homologeō" which means to assent, acknowledge, covenant. It comes from two root words: homo which means the same, and logeo which is related the Word logos which is the Word which God has spoken. Thus when we confess sin, we are acknowledging or coming into agreement or one mind with that which God has spoken about this sin. Some Key Passages to use as models for prayer are found in Ps. 51 and Daniel 9, Nehemiah 9, and Ezra 9.

Acts 17:30-31 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead." (NASB77)

Many of us have learned these verses, but knowing the answers in our heads is very different from applying them to our own lives, in our hearts! So take a few minutes to answer these questions and make an application of them to your own life.

1. Am I a sinner?
2. Do I believe, truly believe that God send His son for me specifically? Why or why not?
3. Did He free me from my sins? If so, how?
4. What part does the blood play in cleansing me from sin?
5. Do I believe that His blood is able to make me clean?
6. Is it possible for me to lead a holy life
7. What part does faith play in my salvation? Rom 4:3

Hannah Whitall Smith is one of my favorite authors because her application of the Word is so practical and personal. In her book, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, she states, "We can only walk in this path by looking continually unto Jesus, moment by moment; and if our eyes are taken off of Him to look upon our own sin and our own weakness, we shall leave the path at once. The believer, therefore, who has, as he trusts, entered upon this highway, if he finds himself overcome by sin, must flee with it instantly to the Lord. He must act on [1John 1:9](#): "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He must not hide his sin and seek to salve it over with excuses, or to push it out of his memory by the lapse of time. But he must do as the children of Israel did, rise up "early in the morning," and "run" to the place where the evil thing is hidden, and take it out of its hiding-place, and lay it "out before the Lord." He must confess his sin. And then he must stone it with stones, and burn it with fire, and utterly put it away from him, and raise over it a great heap of stones, that it may be forever hidden from his sight. And he must believe, then and there, that God is, according to His word, faithful and just to forgive him his sin, and that He does do it; and further, that He also cleanses him from all unrighteousness. He must claim an immediate forgiveness and an immediate cleansing by faith, and must go on trusting harder and more absolutely than ever."

The phrase, "flee with it instantly to the Lord," really impacted me because I realized there were times I felt I needed to hang back and leave time for sin's aroma to dispel before I again could approach God's holy throne to draw near to Him. We can't help ourselves or clean up our own hearts, we need to run to Him as fast as we can and let Him do His cleansing work! If your little child lost its way in the woods, would you want him to hide in fear of your displeasure or run back to you as quickly as possible?

What is the Lord Speaking to You?

Is the LORD convicting your heart that there are areas that need to be brought into His light and confessed? Ask the LORD to reveal sin in your life by the power and light of His Holy Spirit. It is very easy, in our desire to be clean, to fall into condemnation and listen to the accuser of the brethren, who would try to make us feel unworthy to draw near to God. When dealing with sin, keep it simple. Confess the sin and ask for God's cleaning, believe that He has heard and forgiven and by faith trust that the sin has been removed. When you feel tempted to sin again, come immediately to the LORD and ask for His help to stand against it!

Responding to God

Go back through this chapter and pray for a deep release of the spirit of repentance in 1) your own heart, 2) within the Church, and 3) within this nation.

Remember that 1 John 1:9 tells us that when we confess our sins to Him, he is faithful and just to cleanse us from all unrighteousness! Rejoice with the LORD in the cleansing power of His blood and by faith receive His forgiveness and cleansing!