

Letting Christ Cleanse the Heart

by Reuben Walter

The sermon teaches that true Christian living requires allowing Christ to cleanse our hearts from within, acknowledging our flaws, and fostering unity among believers.

Duration: 42:54

Scripture: Isaiah 64:6, Luke 6:45, 1 John 3:1, 1 John 3:18-20

Topics: "Cleansing"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker encourages the audience to reflect on the circumstances that God allows in their lives. He compares the surface of the ocean to the human heart, emphasizing that God wants to purify and transform our hearts to be like His Son. The speaker challenges the audience to think about a sin that humbles them and breaks them, and to consider the nature of that sin. He then discusses the importance of not judging others and highlights how interpersonal relationships can reveal our own weaknesses and shortcomings. The speaker concludes by reminding the audience that God uses these circumstances to draw us closer to Him and encourages them to trust in His answers to their prayers.

Transcript

Praise God for his word. Praise God for the message here, Grandpa, setting our affections above him. Pretty ironic that I never discussed this with Grandpa here, but that's the word the Lord gave me this morning, or this week anyway.

But before I start, I feel a need for prayer, brothers and sisters. Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning, we humble ourselves in your sight, knowing that there is nothing that we can do except you do it in us and through us. Heavenly Father, we pray for leading here, for guiding, for your Holy Spirit to direct us, Lord, that the words that come forth from us, Lord, may be your words and that they may go forth into the hearts of your children, Lord, that we may be comforted, challenged, convicted, and most of all, changed from glory to glory into the image of your dear son Jesus, Father.

We pray this this morning in Jesus' name. Amen. Brothers and sisters, this week I thought a lot about our hearts.

You know, the Christian life is a heart issue. It's the heart, it's the heart, it's the heart, again and again and again. What we only do, what we do on the surface, what we are on the surface is only what we have been in the heart.

Our hearts are a vast, immense treasure house, a storehouse. And our hearts are deep, very, very deep. And as we go through life, treasures are stored up in that heart.

We all know before we're converted that not even one good treasure gets stored up there, unless our parents are teaching us and training us in the ways of God, planting a seed in his word, that's a treasure, so that one day that treasure will actually convert us. That treasure in our hearts will actually change our hearts. What we are physically is really what we are inside, deep inside, and have been for a long time.

And that treasure chest gets filled and stored up like a bank account. We fill it up with our actions, with our attitudes, with our ways of looking at life, at other people, at brothers and sisters, at the unconverted. All these add up and they fill that chest, that treasure chest.

And Jesus says, I'd like to start off with Luke 6, it's a short verse and then we go to another one. Jesus said in Luke 6, 45, A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good, and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

You see, that's what our Savior came to do when, you know, we talked a lot about it here at Easter. He came not only to reconcile us to God with His death, but to give us the life through His resurrection. And we went pretty in-depth in it.

Now we need to know what is the depth of the human heart so that he can fully have his lordship over our lives. How deep does it go? How deep is the corruption in the human heart? Most of you know that verse in Isaiah, the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Brothers and sisters, let me freely speak to you today.

Who can know the human heart? Who can know the depths of it? If we open our ears and our eyes of understanding, Jesus Christ can show us the depths of our hearts. Too many times we don't allow Him to do that very thing. The very thing that is the blessing on our lives, we don't allow Jesus Christ to do.

Now let's turn to John, no, 1st John chapter 3. I'll read a couple of passages here. 1st John chapter 3, we'll start at verse 1. Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God, therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure. Brothers and sisters, I can say honestly, it does not yet appear what we shall be. I don't know, and I'm fully persuaded that most of you don't know what is the depth at which he can reveal himself in us, and what is the depth of the human heart.

And then therefore he goes on to say, and every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure. Let's skip back to verse 18, same chapter. My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth, and hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.

For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God, and whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments and do those things which are pleasing in his sight. Brothers, here

is a verse.

If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our hearts. If we already see some of the depths of our heart, the depths of who that inner man really is, guess what God sees. I think if God would reveal to us the full measure of the depth of the human being, we would probably, we couldn't take it.

We would probably die despairing. And so is a faithful God, and he only reveals in measure, if we are willing to know. And the question is, do we want to know? Well, it says here, if our hearts condemn us not, then we have confidence, and then whatever we ask we receive of him, nothing excluded, everything.

So our life is basically, our Christian walk is a heart issue. And I'd like to speak this to, not only to those who believe, who are Christians already, also to the young people, those who haven't given their lives to the Lord, and those who have, who are growing, who sometimes don't understand what's going on with them, what's wrong with me, why is it this way? If these questions cross your mind, take comfort, you're not alone, because our life, our Christian life, has nothing to do with the outside, absolutely nothing. Remember that verse in Matthew 23, when Jesus rebuked the Pharisees and called them hypocrites, he said, cleanse first that which is inside.

Now we all know we can cleanse ourselves on the outside, but we can't cleanse ourselves on the inside. So what did Jesus mean? Cleanse that which is inside the cup. I believe the only thing Jesus meant there was, start acknowledging and being honest with yourself, and with God, and with your fellow men.

Being honest, who we are. Cleanse that first which is inside the cup. We can't even cleanse ourselves from the filthy works on the outside.

How can we cleanse ourselves on the inside? We can't. Jesus Christ has to do it. How can he do it? If we let him.

If we acknowledge and come to grips with who we are. It is not gritting our teeth and trying to be good, trying to stay away from this, or trying not to get enticed with the lust of the flesh, or the lust of the eyes, or with those attitudes, or whatever else hinders and destroys or holds back the Christian from walking freely with God. It's not doing it on the outside.

Brothers and sisters, God will make sure the circumstances arise where your heart is exposed. God will make sure of that. We can do as much as we want externally.

We can put on that pious look. We can fool people. Only until God turns up the heat.

God puts the pressure on. And he does it for a purpose. To reveal your heart to you.

And I'm saying that to me too. He turns it up so that he reveals our heart to ourselves. And if we're honest, he can show us wonderful things.

But we've got to be honest. We've got to be willing to admit. And so, this human heart, for it to be cleansed and purified as we just read, inside, not outside, we first have to come to grips with this reality.

That the circumstances that God puts us in are designed. Specifically, intricately designed. If we look at this universe, if we look at the human body, it's intricately, wonderfully, amazingly designed.

Now, won't the God who saved us from wrath design the every circumstance in our life to draw us to himself? Wouldn't he do that? He would be contradicting his very nature, if he wouldn't. So the things that we don't understand, the things that happen to us that make us revolt, or buck, or get bitter, or angry, or full of self-pity, or anything like that, they're all designed by an amazing and incredible designer. And they have a specific purpose.

Very, very specific. Sometimes we think, oh, we brought this on ourselves. Or we may think, now this wasn't necessary.

This wouldn't have needed to happen. This could have been done differently. Why did it have to go that way? Why did that person have to be in my life? Doesn't that show unbelief? That shows us that we don't fully trust him, who has designed and planned out our future to the very second, to the finest details.

When he said, the hairs of your head are numbered, he meant it. He knows everything about us. And the things that we question God over are the very things that he has designed to reveal us to ourselves.

The very things, so that he may be able to cleanse us. You see, he can only cleanse what we acknowledge. He cannot cleanse the heart, or we, the parts of our heart, as the song goes, the heart with many doors, he cannot cleanse those doors, and we don't let him in.

He will not open that door and force himself in. No way. God is not like that.

He wants you to open it up yourself. And how do we open it up? We need to be honest with God. You know, Satan's a liar, the biggest liar in creation.

And his plan and our purpose is to fool you with his lies. To fool us, and ultimately to destroy us with his lies. And when God puts the pressure on, when our circumstances are pressuring us, and I'm not going to go into details to mention them.

I want each one of you to think and consider the circumstances that God puts us in. And God allows to come into our life. I don't know each one of your storms, or whatever you may be going through.

I may know in part, only what we see on the surface. But that's not the whole story. That's just the beginning of the story.

It's like looking on the surface of the ocean. What do you see? All you see is water. But what do we see when we go down inside, underneath the surface? We see millions and billions of life forms.

That's an illustration of the human heart. And God wants to purify that to the depths, to the deepest part. He wants to purify it, and draw it, and make it like his own dear son, just as we read here.

So that he can fully reveal himself to us, and draw us to himself. So we may sometimes be wondering, what is happening? What is going on? And we may question God. We may get bitter at God.

When we get better at people, we get better at God. I've got this to tell you, brothers and sisters, if there's bitterness in our hearts, then we're not bitter at a person. We're bitter at God for putting me into this circumstance.

We're bitter at God for allowing this to happen to me. We're bitter at God and distrusting him for doing what he's doing. You are not bitter at a person, because the Bible says, we are not wrestling against flesh

and blood.

We are wrestling against the principalities and the powers of the air. And young people especially, you're young and vulnerable to Satan's attacks. Some of you think you might be a few grades up already, but circumstances come up where you are proven.

What's really in your heart? What's really there? If the love of Christ is there, if brokenness is there, and if we're willing to be honest and admit it, he can cleanse that part. He can purify us, if we are willing. How many of us go on and nurse our attitudes? You ever heard that term before, nursing? What does a nurse do? Faithfully attends it, to keep it alive.

Is that what we do with our attitudes, our feelings towards a person or a situation? It's not the person or the situation. It is God speaking to our hearts, trying to show us, open this door for me. I want in, but I'm not going to force myself on you.

And some of his biggest lies that Satan has with believers is the lie of self-righteousness. Somehow, some way, we think, we believe, we are better. We may not openly state it.

We may not even consciously think it. But the simple fact that we develop un-Christlike mentalities or attitudes towards any situation, and I mean any situation, none excluded, justice or effect, shows us he's a liar and he tries to destroy. We are no better than anybody else.

None of us. We are all saved by grace. We're wretched.

Without Christ, he said plainly to us, you can do nothing without me. So, he uses that one. And he uses it to destroy.

You see, God loves unity. So, if God loves it, guess what Satan does? The other extreme. He hates it.

He hates it with a passion, because he knows unity destroys him. Unity takes out the feet from under Satan, and he can't work. So, he tries to destroy unity.

When Christ is working in our hearts, he tries to build it. When Satan is working in our hearts, he tries to destroy it. And it's very important that we understand why God is allowing things to happen to us.

Very important that we understand. In Romans 14, verse 10, But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou say that not thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess to God.

So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us therefore not judge one another any more, but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. You see, that's sometimes the very methods that God uses to draw out our hearts.

Interpersonal relationships. That's one of the best methods that God uses to expose our hearts to ourselves. And if we're willing to be honest, he can show us wonderful things, I tell you.

He can show us things that humble us, that humiliate us. And it's important that we are honest with it. It is important that we allow him to do that.

Let's take the eyes of our understanding and put them inward. And say, Lord, what are you saying to me? Whenever he presses us, whenever there's something in our lives that we don't understand, whenever there's something that causes us to have self-pity or bitterness, or anything that takes away the peace of Jesus from in here, anything, we need to question ourselves and nothing else. Because Jesus is a personal savior.

He can only work in a group if he is a personal savior of each one. God starts on the individual. He's a personal God and a personal savior.

And only then can he build his church when he's done his work in his heart, in our hearts, to really bring forth his will in our lives. And one of the ways, one of the ways that Satan lies to us is, and many of us are not aware of it, brothers and sisters. And I'm not saying this to accuse anybody or to point fingers at any person.

I'm speaking this because I've gone through it. I've been there. And I'm not saying that I've learned it all yet.

And it is strange. Sometimes when we look, sit back and look at ourselves from another viewpoint, don't we notice how we can, how we are partial in our hearts? You see, God can't open that door and cleanse us if we don't let him. We love that partiality.

Oh, we'll say, no, we're not partial. I'm not partial. I try to be honest and fair with everybody.

Well, I'll give you a little test. If you like a person, if you love a person, how much can you overlook? Think of someone you care for and love. Look how many failures and weaknesses you can overlook in him or her.

Just think about it. Then turn the coin over and think about a person that is always in your eyesight. And no matter where you turn, that person is in your way.

Can that person do something right in your eyes? The way that person holds a spoon is going to infuriate you. Now who's got the problem? Think about it, brothers and sisters. I know you're hearing me because you all go through this and I've gone through it.

Why? God wants to open the door to our hearts so that he can make us like his son Jesus. And then we pray all those prayers that he should vault us out of our circumstances. We cry to him, release us, release us.

Give us, answer our prayers. You promised to answer our prayers. Well, guess what he's doing? He is answering your prayer.

I can't do it unless you let me. God starts the process of cleansing the heart from inside. But we got to let him in.

We got to let that, we got to open that door. To love from a pure heart is a very difficult thing. Very difficult.

I'm saying today it is totally impossible unless Jesus Christ is dwelling in our hearts. That's how the depths, that's how deep the depths of the human heart go. I say it's impossible.

And he's willing, he is able. And one thing I can tell you, brothers and sisters, God never works on just one side. If there's an interpersonal relationship issue, he is not just working with one party.

He is always working with both sides. Always. Because why do interpersonal relationships, why do things flare up in our lives, why do things happen to us? Because there is an offending party and there is an offended party.

That's a fact of life. That is 100% of the reasons that interpersonal relationship issues arise in our lives. And they're not bad.

Oh, we think they're so bad and so terrible. No, that's the best thing that can happen to us. All we need is to be honest and recognize it for what it is.

And God can cleanse us. He can purify us. There's two sides to every coin.

And there's two sides to every situation. Every single one of them. The offended party always sees one side of the coin.

The offending party sees the other side. How can God work out his perfect will in our lives? How can God come to the depths of our hearts? When these issues come up in our lives? I believe it's only he speaking, loving us, caring for us, drawing us away from our selfishness, our laziness, disrespect for authority, fleshly liberties, attitudes in the heart, self-pity, bitterness, whatever is inside. He's just drawing it out.

Drawing it out mostly through interpersonal relationships. The worst thing we can do, brothers and sisters, is to justify a position we take. It says no flesh is justified in his sight, it is evident.

No flesh. That means we are not justified over anything. He justifies us.

And when he justifies us, I don't need to justify myself. But when issues come up in our lives, brothers and sisters, young people especially, you may not understand what's happening to you. You may be bucking against the very thing Christ is trying to teach you.

You see when the disciples were out there on the boat, rowing desperately across the water, not getting anywhere. Jesus comes walking on the water and what did he do? He cried out for fear. He was their help.

He was their answer. And they cried out for fear. The very source of their help.

They were afraid of it. And I think we can relate to that. The very thing that troubles us could be the answer to our troubles.

If we're willing to face it. So the only way I can see this, I can see us as children of God being drawn to the Father, being drawn to Jesus, is to not justify ourselves. Be willing to be honest.

Christians come in all shapes and sizes. Imagine a flower garden with only tulips. Wouldn't that be boring if God made all tulips or all evergreens? Wouldn't it be? He made our characters, our nature.

He made our disposition, our whatever, our personality. And we're all different, all unique, as unique as his creation is. And if we want to see Jesus in each other, the first thing we got to do is accept that Christ, God, make no mistakes.

He does everything right and perfect. Then we need to accept, if he accepted me as his child, who am I to reject another? Who am I that I justify myself before God and before men? What have I? Why do I brag as though I have not received and as though it is something that belongs to me? You've got nothing. We've got nothing.

Everything is his. And a glorious, harmonious picture can be seen of Christ in the things he's created. And it's the same way with humanity, with brothers and sisters in Christ.

A beautiful picture shows forth if we're only willing to humble ourselves. Showing forth the praises of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. We're not walking around looking for reasons to justify a position that we have.

Or taking fleshly liberties that we know deliberately offend and hurt our brothers and sisters. You're not walking in love. It's plain and simple.

We're not walking in Christ. If we, if my, if I justify things in my heart, it could be selfishness. It could be liberties.

It could be sin. Whatever it is, Christ wants to cleanse us to the core and not on the surface. A surface Christian is very shallow.

Very shallow. And I find many people, I talk with many people, they can speak wonderfully, could fellowship beautifully, but that's only on the surface. Jesus Christ is interested in the depth of our hearts, not on the outward show we can put on before men.

He's not interested in that. He calls that hypocrisy. He wants us completely.

Let's think about it. Another point I have here, a couple points that I'd like to bring forth before we close here, is God does not need to chastise us over sin. We know and acknowledge and repent of the sin, the failures that we have as children of God are the chastisement.

Have you ever done something wrong and you knew was wrong as a child of God and felt good about it? Makes you feel terrible. If it's the sin that we call sin, we feel horrible about it. That is the chastisement.

That is the brokenness. And we come to him in brokenness, acknowledging, God be merciful to me, a sinner. I am no better than anybody else.

That's not chastisement. We have chastened ourselves there. And that's when he comforts us.

That's when he draws us and holds us to his bosom, brothers and sisters. Why does God chasten us? I'll tell you why. We get chastened over hard issues that we justify in our lives.

That's why he chastens us. That's why chastisement comes upon us. Issues in our lives that we justify before God and in the sight of men.

So if you're asking yourself at this point, why is this or why is that? We need to turn the camera inward and take a good high-resolution pixel or picture and let him examine it. And let's examine it. Our Christian life is a hard issue.

And I want you to take a test here now before we close. Think of a sin in your life that really floors you, that humiliates you, breaks you, and causes you to cry out to God for forgiveness and mercy. Think of one.

And then, now think. I'm sure every one of us has at least one or two of them. That's really humbling us.

And then think what kind of a sin was it? Let's stop and think about this. Was the sin that floored us and that humiliated us and broke us so badly, was it hypocrisy? Young people, was it disobedience to your parents? You know what the Bible says? It's one of the Ten Commandments. Has that ever floored you and broken you? Was it disrespect to authority? Was it a little white lie? Did it floor you? Was it unkindness? Was it a fleshly liberty that I took to hurt my fellow man? Was it pride? I bet you, most of you, it was none of them.

For some maybe, yes, but for most of us, it's none of these. It's other things. It's the categories we have foreseen in our lives.

We put one sin way up there, the one that humbles us before men. We have bitter outrage, for instance. That's the one that floors us.

That's the one that hurts us and it humiliates us and it causes us to cry out to God. For many of us here, we know for men, it could be lust of the eyes. Some things floor us.

Others don't. And Jesus Christ is trying to impress upon our hearts, stop putting sin into categories. Young person, if you are disobedient to your parents, you are committing as big a sin as if you fornicated.

But do we put them in the same category? No, we don't. Why? The same 10 commandments that said, honor your father and your mother said, thou shall not commit adultery. Is there a different category there? Think about it.

Let it sink into your hearts and let's stop putting sin in categories and then He can cleanse us to the core. And then this verse becomes a reality that I read in the beginning. Whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him.

You see, we're asking and we're not receiving. It's because we're asking amiss. We're asking for the wrong things often.

What causes us to ask in the first place? A need causes us to ask, right? A need in our lives causes us to ask, to pray, to seek. And if we would really be honest, He is answering our prayer from the minute we pray. But we push that aside.

This is not what I want. I want you to answer that prayer, not the one that's my heart. Our life is a heart issue, brothers and sisters.

Let's seriously think about it. God can do miracles, wonderful miracles. And His primary purpose, His plain, everything He does to us is to purify our hearts, to make us into His Son's image.

If we keep that in mind, I tell you, we look at people in a different light and we look at life in a different light and we look at our circumstances in a different light, a much different light. We stop balking and we start submitting.

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