

Triple Clean

This lesson will describe three kinds of cleanness: physical, spiritual, and mental. They are mostly distinguishable, and yet have interconnections.

Physical Cleanness

All people have their ideas of cleanness and how necessary or possible it is, and so there are great differences in practice. Some people are meticulously clean, some are “clean enough”, some are sloppy, and some are absolutely filthy. A person can have fanatical need for a spotless home and perfect personal hygiene, and yet be morally and spiritually filthy. On the other hand, a person can be saved and not be seriously bothered by physical uncleanness. Some of this is cultural, and some is personal.

I think some people can be so bothered by the thought of germs and uncleanness that they become a little nutty, and may even suffer physical problems due to their fear of “germs”. Fear of germs seems to be strong with new mothers and tends to fade after a little “practical experience”. Maybe a little uncleanness helps to build kid’s immune systems. Fortunately most of the world has improved in sanitary conditions so typhus, cholera, and dysentery are not so widespread and decimating as they once were.

Even Jesus was not overly concerned with a normal amount of uncleanness. In Mk. 7:1-23 he was reproached by the Pharisees because his disciples were eating without washing their hands. He said that a little dirt like that just goes “into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats”, but what really defiles a man is what comes out from the heart (evil thoughts, fornications, murders, etc.).

How clean is clean enough? Obviously there will be differences of opinion, but serious sloppiness, clutter, or hoarding can be evidence of spiritual problems.

1. Greed or covetousness (the lust of the eyes – “More, more, more”)

How many of some type items do you really need? Do you have some compulsion to collect stuff? Is that where you get a sense of security? Is it an innocent interest, or an obsession?

Do you even have enough space to store all of this stuff?

Do you already have something but need to buy another because you can’t find it?

Will some additional amount really satisfy you? Real satisfaction in life does not come from things.

When you die, will your family think your things are a treasured remembrance, or “How in the world are we ever going to get rid of all this stuff?”

2. Unbelief (fear that you will run out of something)

This was common with people who grew up in the great Depression of the 1930’s. That time was so devastating that some people would hoard, always afraid that their would be another shortage. They would collect giant balls of string or tin foil, and never throw anything away, because “there might come a time when we can’t get it”. This was also common after the blizzards of 1978-1979. Every snow warning would cause runs on the grocery stores so there would literally be no bread, milk, or toilet paper.

Some preparation is obviously wise and good, but a hoarding fear shows a lack of faith that our heavenly Father will really provide for us.

3. Perhaps there are spirits of uncleanness.

Generally we think of unclean spirits as being those that cause sexual deviancy and perversions, but if your home is seriously unclean, maybe you should consider whether you need deliverance from spirits that cause you to be satisfied with living in filth or clutter, or demand that you always need more, or cannot part with stuff.

4. After a while (a lifetime?), it just seems normal and becomes habitual. People can become so accustomed to uncleanness that they don’t notice, and so it doesn’t seem to bother them.

Spiritual Cleanness

This is where we come to the defiling nature of sin. Sin causes internal defilement, of the mind and spirit.

Much of Moses’ law had to do with uncleanness. There were laws on the uncleanness of bodily emissions, of the touching of dead bodies, of leprosy, of mold, of dietary restrictions, and how some animals were “clean” and some “unclean”, etc. These types of uncleanness could prevent men from ministering in the temple, or could cause people to be put outside the camp, and required sacrifices for cleansing. Although these sanitary laws had real physical benefits, I believe these example of uncleanness also were pictures of the defiling nature of sin. Sin makes us spiritually dirty. We even use that terminology today, like someone having a dirty mind, a potty mouth, filthy language, etc.

In Mk. 5 the Gadarene demoniac was said to have an “unclean spirit”. But when Jesus cast out the legion of spirits, it says he sat “clothed and in his right mind”. Maybe the prevalence in our society of unclothed persons is due to unclean spirits.

When God awakens our hearts to repentance, we recognize our spiritual dirtiness and we cry out for him to cleanse and wash us from our sins.

Ps. 19:12 – “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.”

Ps. 51:1-2, 7 – “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. ... Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

God also commands us to wash ourselves from sin, by turning from our sins and doing righteousness.

Isa. 1:16-18 – “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Jer. 4:14 – “O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved.”

He also promises to cleanse his people from their sins.

Ezek. 36:25, 29 – “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. ... I will also save you from all your uncleanness: “

Being washed from sin is part of the gospel message.

Ac. 22:16 – “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord,”

It is the actual experience of those who were once filthy sinners.

1 Cor. 6:11 (after a catalog of sins of the unrighteous, who will not inherit the kingdom of God, it says) “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

And it is how we maintain purity in our daily walk.

1 Jn. 1:7, 9 – “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Mental Cleanness

Mental cleanness is the result of spiritual cleansing. Where previously we did not find sinful words, pictures, and actions as objectionable, a clean heart makes them stand out in their filthiness. A joke or movie that seemed enjoyable or humorous as an unbeliever now is seen as dirty and displeasing to God, and our new, redeemed nature. Foul and profane language now is a jolt to our minds. Where once we saw in every innocent word or gesture some hidden and dirty double meaning, now we are free from that filthy filter. We have taken off our “dirty glasses” and can now see clearly.

When the Bible talks about washing, cleansing, or renewing, it is generally not talking about our physical bodies, but our minds and spirits. God wants us to be clean on the inside.

Tit. 3:5 – “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”

We are washed by believing on Christ and being born again, but after that there is to be a continual renewing of our minds (Eph. 4:23 – “And be ye renewed in the spirit of your mind”).

Rom. 12:2 – “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Now it should be our purpose to live free of all that is dirty and defiling.

2 Cor. 10:5 – “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.”

2 Cor. 7:1 – “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”