

Words of Welcome:

Reminder of the You Version **LiveEvent (place to share prayer)**, encourage **Facebook & Twitter** #fccisintentional

Review this Series ... Week #1: Our first act of intentionality was reading the Word.
Week #2: The call to embrace and share the Gospel (why we shifted to 2nd service). **Week #3** (mid-March): True Community (loving and supporting one another). **Week #4** (mid-May) Time Management (making the most of every opportunity to the glory of God).

Today: All of these things we have looked at require a great deal of intentionality to live with. Reading scripture, sharing the Gospel, embracing community, and managing our time. Today, we are going to look at how we handle sin temptation in our lives. I wonder if sometimes we don't spend enough time talking about sin in the church. We have become apprehensive to label various things as sin or not ... and honestly, for good reasons, we've grown less comfortable demanding certain behaviors be done – and certain behaviors be avoided. I recognize that some of that is good because after all we must function under grace – but I fear that avoiding the discussion of sin leaves us vulnerable to its power in our lives.

WHAT IS SIN? The truth is that sin, as defined in the original translations of the Bible, means "**to miss the mark.**" The mark, in this case, is the standard of perfection established by God and evidenced by Jesus. Ultimately, the Holy Spirit of God must confirm in our heart what is sin for us.

Understanding what sin is for some is based on the 10 Commandments:

- "You must not have any other god but me.**
- "You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind.**
- "You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God.**
- "Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy.**
- "Honor your father and mother.**
- "You must not murder.**
- "You must not commit adultery.**
- "You must not steal.**
- "You must not testify falsely against your neighbor.**
- "You must not covet your neighbor's house. (Exodus 20:1-17 NLT)**

In the Jewish tradition, I understand that they don't understand the 10 Commandments to be rules but rather headings of their rules – so this list would actually serve as a "Table of Contents" to the over **613 rules** and regulations in the Old Testament Law. Christians have fought over the centuries to have these 10 Laws placed in classrooms and courtrooms to remind us of the moral fiber our nation was founded upon.

Can you imagine following 613 rules. Paul states in Galatians 5, **"For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen**

away from God's grace. What is important is faith expressing itself in love." (Galatians 5:4, 6 NLT) I don't know about you but I can't follow 613 rules very effectively. If I'm bound to that Law, then I'm a sinner and I always will be. Instead, Paul calls us to experience God's grace which is a law of love.

To me, sin is living in disobedience to the voice of God.

- being generous – can be a sin
- drinking diet Mountain Dew – can be a sin if God clearly called me to avoid it.
- not helping a stranded motorist – can be a sin if God clearly called me to stop and help.
- not saying hello to someone or giving someone a call/text – can be a sin if God laid them on your heart.
- singing in church for all the wrong reasons – can even be a sin if you desire to glorify yourself

INSERT: I'm wondering this morning: What are some common areas of temptation for you? At home? At work? At play? In your leisure? This wouldn't be a great time to ask for examples from the crowd today ... who wants to share their temptations and weaknesses of sin? But in all honesty, we all have areas of weakness and temptation.

The Bible says, **"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives"** (1 John 1:8-10). Now I'm pretty sure that no one wants to be a liar here today and say they are without sin – so we are stuck – we don't want to admit our sin but we don't want to admit we don't sin either!

What we do want is to discover a life that frees us from the bondage and guilt that sin produces.

David wrote some interesting words recorded in the 24th chapter of Psalms looking at this hope of approaching the presence of God. The writer put it in terms that that people Israel would understand. Moses (who wrote the Law of God) would go up to Mt. Sinai and experience God's presence and holiness. So the people of God would often understand God's presence resting on the high ground of the mountains. Here's how David spoke about the desire to enter into the presence of God:

- 1 The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him.**
- 2 For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.**
- 3 Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?**
- 4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies.**
- 5 They will receive the Lord's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior.**
- 6 Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob. (24:1-6 NLT)**

Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase known as the Message translated David's words this way:

Who can climb Mount God? Who can scale the holy north-face?

Only the clean-handed, only the pure-hearted;

Men who won't cheat, women who won't seduce.

God is at their side; with God's help they make it.

This, Jacob, is what happens to God-seekers, God-questers. (Psalm 24:3-6 MSG)

Two aspects of cleanliness and purity are mentioned ... first, **clean hands**. Jewish listeners would have understood the importance of clean hands as it was a significant part of their culture. There became a practice of washing hands before each meal. The procedure is to pour water out from a cup or glass first twice over the right hand and then twice over the left hand--care being taken that the unwashed hands do not touch the water used for the washing. The hands are then dried with a towel before partaking of the meal. A benediction is recited over the washing of the hands: *"Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Thy commandments and has commanded us concerning the washing of the hands."*

In **Mark 7** there is a story of the Pharisees seeing Jesus' disciples eat without this ceremonial washing. After they ask him why he is breaking their traditions, he answers them by condemning them because they follow their man-made traditions over the law of God. For example, the fifth commandment is to "honor your father and your mother" but they were allowing people to deny helping their needy parents because they had to sacrifice to the church instead (this particular offering was known as a "Corban." Jesus concludes his lashing by saying, **"All of you listen," he said, "and try to understand. It's not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart."** (Mark 7:14-15 NLT)

What Jesus is communicating at this point is that the religious view point of God is all wrong. Religion is about us trying to please God – through ceremonial cleansing of hands, for example. But in a loving relationship with the Almighty, it's what comes from the heart that is most important. Even his disciples had a hard time with this idea so he summarized it this way for them: **"For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you."** (Luke 7:21-23 NLT)

The ancient Jews are critical of their dirty hands but Jesus is reminding them that it's more important to have a **pure heart**. It was King David who cried out in his shame, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God."** (Psalm 51:10) When he wrote this, he didn't use the Hebrew word "yatzar" which means to form something from a pre-existing material (like create a meal, or form a shape); he used the word "**bara**" which is a verb used to refer to God's creation of the cosmos.

Why would David do this? Because he recognized that his heart was naturally messed up and that he would need a completely new start. The remedy of his dirty heart was a complete demolition of the old and the fresh breath of God to create the new. For the Jew, the heart represents the inner person, the resting place of emotions, thought and personal will. Naturally it would then make the heart the source of our uncleanness, moral defilement, and every perversity.

To cleanse oneself from this kind of lifestyle, there was a quality of life known as a "**tohora**" – a word normally used to describe the consecration or cleansing of things set apart for God not of water but by blood. **So we can see, even in the King David's words hundreds of years before Christ, he understood the only solution to his dirty hands and impure heart was the cleansing of the heart through the sacrifice of God.** Only that level of sacrifice could create within us "**lev tahor**" (a pure heart). A heart that is re-created, redirected, refocused into its original image ... the image of God.

Here's the danger in our pursuit of clean hands and pure hearts. We cannot use the standards of man (like the Pharisee's were doing in Mark 7) ... we must call out on the Spirit of God to create within us LEV TAHOR. A pure heart actually produces the clean hands we seek. How do we do this?

How can you do this? Personal Application ...

A good starting place is putting to memory this Psalm: "**Search me O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.**" Psalm 139:23-24. This prayer needs to impact every area of our life. I want us to do a little exercise together this morning as we consider the impact of this prayer.

- Take a sheet of paper, insert or bulletin
- We are going to ask God to clean our hands and purify our heart in various areas of our life ...

- > **Work ...** how do you act there, do you glorify God, operate with integrity, offer your best
- > **Home ...** do those who know you best see you honoring God, serving God, leading them
- > **Social – Friendships ...** treating others like yourself, loving your neighbor, are you having an influence over others and lifting them up, encouraging them, praying for them?
- > **Entertainment – TV, Music, Internet ...** do the TV shows you watch encourage your faith, does the music you listen to bless you and lift your spirits, how are you managing your time on the internet and are the images you see hindering the cleanliness of your hands and the purity of your heart?

I'm wondering today, has the Lord revealed to you this morning the condition of your hands and your heart? Pastor Steve has come to lead us in a response to the work of God in your life. Let's stand together and read these words from Psalm 24 again ...

3 Who may climb the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?

4 Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies.

5 They will receive the Lord's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior.

6 Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob.

NO PRAYER ...

TIME MARKER: 9:55!!

SONG: "Give us Clean Hands"

PRAYER - (Then into more singing)

BENEDICTION: *MIKE*