

We need to examine now what is really involved in house-cleaning our soul from two viewpoints: what we can do ourselves, and what God alone can do. It is obvious that we cannot do it all, or Christ never would have had to come and die on the cross. But we must make some effort for ourselves. The Jews at the time of Jesus went through a ritual at every Passover of searching the house from top to bottom for any leaven that might be there. Any that they found they threw out, for the Passover was to be eaten with completely unleavened bread. The search and destroy mission represented the removal of evil influence in their lives. Likewise, we must make an aggressive search for the evil in our lives and remove it from our hearts. Sometimes this removal is very painful, something like surgery. But some of our problems are like cancer, and it takes drastic measures to eliminate them. Paul speaks in Colossians 3:5 of 'putting to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature.' This idea of killing what is selfish in us seems very harsh and yet unless we submit to God's will, our selfish desires will continually be in the way of our relationship with God. This idea is expressed in Galatians 2:19-20, 'For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.' We have to exchange our desires for God's desires. We have to clean out our "self," and put in Christ in its place.

It is actually pretty hard to separate God's parts from our part in this cleansing process. Both are necessary, working together to do the job. When I was much smaller and more impatient, used to run into the bathroom, rinse my hands with water, and use a towel to try to scrub off the dirt. But when I showed my hands to my mother, she sent me back with, "... and use some soap this time!" It was hard for me to understand why the soap could do such a better job in loosening up the dirt. But I learned that cleaning was impossible without soap no matter how hard I scrubbed, and on the other hand, the soap wasn't just going to clean me by sitting in the dish. We must also realize that, in our efforts to purify our hearts, that a special ingredient must be added in order to become clean. This is, of course, the Blood of Jesus Christ, which, as we read in Rev 1:5, has "washed us from our sins." In Hebrews 10:4 we read that 'It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take (wash) away sins'. Nothing else will do but the blood of Jesus.

As God says in Is 1:18, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be as wool." John, in speaking of certain in heaven, says: "they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." The idea is that no matter how dirty our soul is it can be washed clean in the blood of Jesus Christ through obedience to him and his word. The analogy to putting on clean clothes is found in several New Testament passages. It is almost like, instead of permanently pressed clothes, we have access to permanently clean clothes through Christ. We read in Galatians 3:27, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ." In Ephesians 4:22-24 we read, "You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Once we have removed from our soul the uncleanness of evil desires, we must renew our hearts and attitudes so that we can keep these kinds of desires out of our heart. This is what it takes on our part to keep our hearts pure. Thus, God's part is crucial.

Perhaps the most profound expression of this is found in 1 John 1:7, "... if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from every sin." It is important to note that this is a continual cleansing. Also we read in the ninth verse, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." In these two verses we see our part and Christ's part in the continuing purification of our hearts. We can see that it is not as easy to clean our heart as it is to step into the shower. As we submit our will to Him, we will find our heart more and more closely aligned with his. We must work on it constantly, just as our physical house and body need cleaning constantly. God's grace and Christ's blood are the special ingredients which actually do the cleaning. But we must ever strive to purify our hearts as well, to eliminate sinful desires which cause us to sin.

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