

CLEANING THE INSIDE

“And as He spake, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with him: and He went in, and sat down to meat. And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner. And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also? But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you” (Luke 11:37-41).

Jesus confronts the Pharisees for focusing on outward cleanliness while ignoring the corruption within their hearts. When a Pharisee is surprised that Jesus did not follow the ritual washing, Jesus points out that their concern with external rituals overlooks the deeper issue of inward sin. He teaches that God cares about both the inside and the outside, and true cleanliness begins with inner transformation. This passage emphasizes that real change comes from a cleansed heart, not just external actions. Jesus calls for inward righteousness and mercy, showing that when the heart is right with God, everything else becomes clean.

Real change comes from a cleansed heart, not merely external actions.

Introduction:

1. **The Concern With Outward Appearances:** People often go to great lengths to appear moral and upright, placing significant importance on how they are viewed by others. While their outward behavior may seem admirable, it can hide a deeper, more troubling reality - one where the inside does not match the outside. This obsession with appearances is not a new problem, as we will see in the teachings of Jesus.
2. **Jesus' Warning About Hypocrisy:** Jesus confronted this issue when He rebuked the Pharisees for their focus on external cleanliness while neglecting the state of their hearts (Luke 11:37-41). Similarly, Jesus used vivid imagery, comparing them to whitewashed tombs - beautiful on the outside but filled with corruption on the inside. The Pharisees were outwardly righteous, but inwardly they were full of hypocrisy and sin (Matthew 23:25-28).
3. **The Relevance For Us Today:** Jesus' warning to the Pharisees is a lesson for all of us. If we focus solely on outward appearances while neglecting the inner state of our hearts, we too fall into hypocrisy. True righteousness must begin on the inside. In this lesson, we will examine what it means to clean both the outside and the inside, recognizing that true transformation must start from within.
4. **Cleaning The Inside And Outside Through Conversion, Sanctification, And Continual Growth:** True cleansing begins with the transformation of the heart through conversion - being born again in Christ. However, it is a lifelong process that extends beyond that initial step. Sanctification, the ongoing work of becoming holy and set apart for God, ensures that both the inside and outside of our lives align with His will. Alongside sanctification, continual self-examination, spiritual growth, and accountability within the Body of Christ help us stay on the path of righteousness. It is through this ongoing journey of faith that we are made more like Christ, continually cleansing both the inner heart and outward actions.

1. Cleaning Begins With Conversion:

The Christian life begins with a radical transformation known as conversion, a process initiated through faith in Jesus Christ. This transformation is marked by a spiritual rebirth, where the old self is left behind, and a new life in Christ begins. Jesus taught that being born again is essential for entering the kingdom of God, and this new birth involves the work of the Holy Spirit, the cleansing act of baptism, and the convicting power of God's Word. Conversion is not just an internal change but also a call to obedience, where believers respond to the gospel through faith, repentance, and baptism, and continue to live out a transformed life (Philippians 2:12), growing in holiness and righteousness.

a. By being born again:

- 1) **Jesus Taught The Necessity Of A “New Birth”:** Jesus explained to Nicodemus that in order to see the kingdom of God, one must experience a spiritual rebirth (John 3:3-8). This “new birth” is not a physical transformation, but a complete renewal of the inner self. It marks the beginning of a radical change in a person's heart, mind, and spirit.
- 2) **This New Birth Involves The Spirit And Water:** Jesus clarifies that being born again requires both water and the Spirit (John 3:5). Water refers to the act of baptism, which cleanses us from sin (Acts 2:38), while the Holy Spirit is the agent of regeneration, transforming our hearts through the word of truth He has revealed. Paul emphasizes that it is not by our works of righteousness, but by God's mercy, through the washing of regeneration (baptism) and renewing by the Holy Spirit, that we are born again (Titus 3:5).

- 3) This New Birth Also Involves The Word Of God: The new birth is initiated by God's Word. James states, "Of His own will begat He us with the word of truth" (**James 1:18**). The Word is the seed that produces new life in the believer's heart (**1 Peter 1:22-23**). It convicts us of sin, teaches us the truth of God's grace, and leads us to respond in faith. Thus, the process of being born again is initiated through the hearing and believing of the Gospel, which was revealed by the Holy Spirit (**1 Corinthians 2:10-13; 2 Peter 1:21**).

b. By obeying the gospel:

- 1) The Word That Causes Rebirth Is Proclaimed In The Gospel: The process of being born again is not a mystical or hidden experience; it comes through hearing and responding to the Word of God, which is proclaimed in the gospel (**1 Peter 1:24-25**). The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ - His death, burial, and resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:1-4**) - which brings life to those who believe. As Peter states, "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth forever." This eternal Word is the seed by which we are born anew.
- 2) The Good News Jesus Wanted The Whole World To Hear: Jesus commanded His disciples to "go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (**Mark 16:15-16**). The message of salvation is not for a select few; it is for all people. Jesus wanted the entire world to hear the good news, which offers hope, redemption, and transformation to everyone who believes. Through obedience to the gospel, individuals experience the saving power of God (**Romans 1:16**).
- 3) A Message Requiring Faith, Repentance, And Baptism: Obeying the gospel requires more than just hearing it - it calls for a response of faith, repentance, and baptism. Peter instructs believers to "repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (**Acts 2:38**). Faith is the starting point, as one must believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior (**Acts 3:19**). Repentance follows, as a turning away from sin and a commitment to live in obedience to God. Finally, baptism is the point at which a person's sins are washed away (**Acts 22:16**), uniting the believer with Christ in His death and resurrection (**Acts 8:35-38**). Together, these steps represent the full response of obedience to the gospel.

c. By living a transformed life:

- 1) Conversion Results In A New Creation: Once a person is born again and obeys the gospel, they are no longer the same. Paul writes, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (**2 Corinthians 5:17**). This new creation signifies a complete transformation in the believer's life. The old sinful ways are left behind, and a new life of righteousness (**1 Timothy 6:11**) and holiness begins (**Hebrews 12:14**).
- 2) Sanctification Follows Conversion: The journey of the Christian life continues with sanctification, which is the process of being made holy through the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul explains that "this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour" (**1 Thessalonians 4:3-4**). Sanctification is not a one-time event but a lifelong process of growing in spiritual maturity and aligning more closely with the image of Christ (**2 Corinthians 4:16**).
- 3) Walking In Newness Of Life: After conversion, the believer is called to walk in "newness of life" (**Romans 6:4**). This means that their actions, thoughts, and desires must reflect the new life they have received in Christ. The transformed life is characterized by obedience to God's Word, love for others, and a pursuit of holiness. As Paul states, the believer is to "put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts... and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (**Ephesians 4:22-24**).

Conversion is the beginning of the believer's journey, but it does not end there. The Christian life is one of continual growth through sanctification, where believers are called to put off the old sinful ways and live in newness of life. This ongoing transformation is empowered by the Holy Spirit and involves a daily commitment to pursue righteousness and holiness. By living out the teachings of Christ, walking in obedience to the gospel, and yielding to the Spirit's guidance, believers are shaped into the image of Christ, reflecting His character in every area of their lives.

2. Cleaning Continues By Sanctification:

Sanctification is the ongoing process by which believers are cleansed and set apart for God's purposes. After the initial conversion, sanctification involves a continual "putting off" of the old sinful nature and "putting on" the new life in Christ. This transformation is marked by a growing conformity to the likeness of Christ, requiring believers to address sin, cultivate godly virtues, and yield to the Holy Spirit's guidance. As Christians walk in this path of sanctification, their lives reflect the holiness and righteousness that God desires.

a. Putting off the old man:

- 1) Sanctification Involves Becoming "Holy" And "Set Apart": Sanctification is the process by which a Christian is made holy, set apart for God's purposes. It is not merely about moral improvement but about being transformed into the likeness of Christ. Just as Peter says, "Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15-16). This calling to holiness distinguishes the Christian life, where we are consecrated to live for God, separating ourselves from the corrupt influences of the world (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 6:17; James 4:4) and aligning ourselves with His will.
- 2) This Requires Seriously Addressing Those Things Which Defile A Person: Jesus teaches that it is not external things that defile a person, but what comes from the heart - evil thoughts, adultery, theft, pride, and other sins (Mark 7:20-23). Sanctification demands that we confront these internal issues honestly and with God's help, root them out. We cannot simply change our behavior while ignoring the condition of our hearts (Proverbs 23:7). Becoming holy requires us to acknowledge and confess our sins, seeking transformation from within (Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16).
- 3) Sanctification Is An Ongoing Process Of Putting Off The Old Man: The journey of sanctification is not completed overnight; it is a continual, lifelong process. Paul speaks of "putting off" the old self, which is corrupted by sinful desires, and replacing it with the new self, which is being renewed in the image of Christ (Colossians 3:5-11). This means that Christians must continually address areas of sin in their lives, consciously choosing to leave behind old habits and ways of thinking. While we are positionally sanctified in Christ at conversion, the practical outworking of sanctification happens daily as we submit to the Holy Spirit's work in our lives.

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b. Putting on the new man:

- 1) It Is Not Enough To Get Rid Of The Old; We Must Replace It: Jesus warns us that simply casting out evil without filling the void can lead to greater destruction. If we only focus on removing sin but do not replace it with godly behavior and character, we remain vulnerable to falling back into even worse patterns of sin (Matthew 12:43-45). Sanctification, therefore, is not just about eliminating sinful habits; it is about actively pursuing righteousness (2 Timothy 2:22) and being filled with the character of Christ (Romans 13:14).
- 2) Replacing The Old Man By Putting On The New Man: Paul describes this transformation as putting off the old self and putting on the new self, which is created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:20-24). Similarly, He emphasizes that believers must "put on" virtues such as compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience (Colossians 3:12-17). This conscious decision to clothe ourselves with Christ-like virtues is an essential part of the sanctification process, where we become more like Christ (Romans 8:29) as we walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:25) and live out His teachings (Matthew 7:24-27; John 14:15).
- 3) Producing The Fruit Of The Spirit Instead Of Works Of The Flesh: The transformation of putting on the new man is evidenced by the fruit it produces. Paul contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit. The works of the flesh - sins like envy, strife, and immorality - are replaced by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:19-23). As we put on the new man, our lives begin to reflect these qualities, showing outward evidence of the inward transformation. This fruit is the mark of true spiritual growth and maturity, as we continue to be cleansed both inside and out (Luke 11:41).

c. By yielding to the Holy Spirit:

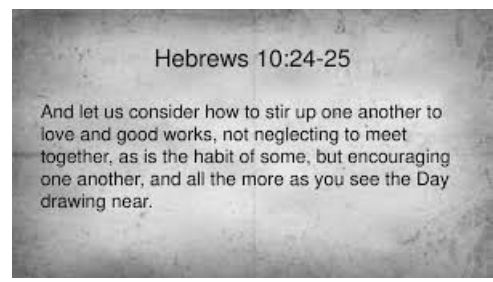
- 1) The Holy Spirit Empowers Sanctification: Sanctification is not something we achieve by our own strength but through the power of the Holy Spirit working within us. Paul reminds us to, “Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (*Galatians 5:16*). The Holy Spirit leads, guides, and strengthens believers, enabling them to resist sinful desires and live in accordance with God’s will (*Romans 8:13-14*). Yielding to the Spirit’s leading through the word He has revealed is essential for the continual process of sanctification, as He directs our thoughts, actions, and desires toward holiness.
- 2) The Spirit Transforms Us Into Christ's Image: The ultimate goal of sanctification is to be conformed to the image of Christ. Paul says, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (*2 Corinthians 3:18*). As we yield to the Spirit by heeding His word, He transforms us more and more into the likeness of Christ, moving us progressively from one level of spiritual maturity to the next.
- 3) The Spirit Produces Spiritual Fruit: The evidence of yielding to the Holy Spirit is seen in the fruit that He produces in our lives. Paul lists the fruit of the Spirit, including love, joy, peace, and patience (*Galatians 5:22-23*). These are the characteristics of a life that is increasingly aligned with God's will. As we allow the Spirit to work in us, these fruits replace the sinful “works of the flesh” and become the markers of true Christian maturity and sanctification (*John 15:4-5*).

The process of sanctification is vital for every Christian, as it represents the continuation of the cleansing work begun at conversion. By putting off the old man and putting on the new, Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live lives that glorify God. As believers yield to the Spirit's leading, they are transformed more and more into the image of Christ, producing the fruit of the Spirit and reflecting God's holiness to the world. This ongoing journey of sanctification is both the calling and privilege of every follower of Christ.

3. Through Continual Self-Examination And Spiritual Growth:

Continual self-examination and spiritual growth are essential aspects of the Christian life. Even after experiencing conversion and the ongoing work of sanctification, Christians are called to regularly evaluate their hearts and actions, ensuring they remain aligned with God’s will. Through self-reflection, maintaining spiritual disciplines, and fostering accountability within the body of Christ, Christians are empowered to grow deeper in their faith and maintain an inward purity that reflects God's holiness.

- a. The Need For Self-Examination: Even after conversion and ongoing sanctification, Christians are called to regularly examine their hearts and lives. Paul encourages believers to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (*2 Corinthians 13:5*). This self-reflection helps us identify areas where we may have slipped back into focusing on outward appearances rather than inward purity.
- b. Maintaining Spiritual Disciplines: In addition to self-examination, spiritual disciplines such as prayer, studying God’s Word, and fellowship with other believers help keep the inside clean. These practices draw us closer to God, aligning our hearts with His will and ensuring that both our inner and outer lives reflect His holiness (*1 Timothy 4:7-8; Hebrews 10:24-25*).
- c. Accountability In The Body Of Christ: While self-examination is important, God also designed the Church as a community to help us stay accountable. Fellowship with other believers provides opportunities for encouragement, correction, and growth (*Hebrews 10:24-25*). Just as iron sharpens iron (*Proverbs 27:17*), we help one another stay focused on inward transformation rather than just outward appearances. Being part of a community that challenges us to grow in righteousness ensures that our hearts are continually being refined by God’s truth and love.



The journey of spiritual growth requires continual attention to both our inner and outer lives. By engaging in self-examination, practicing spiritual disciplines, and embracing accountability with fellow believers, we remain rooted in God’s truth and love. These practices help guard against complacency and ensure that our transformation into Christ-likeness continues as we strive to live holy and pleasing lives before God.

Summary:

1. **Cleaning Begins With Conversion:** The process of true transformation starts with being born again through faith in Jesus Christ. This spiritual rebirth involves repentance, baptism, and the work of the Holy Spirit, resulting in a new creation. Conversion marks the beginning of a believer's journey toward righteousness and obedience to God's will.
2. **Cleaning Continues Through Sanctification:** Sanctification is the ongoing process by which believers are cleansed and set apart for God's purposes. This involves putting off the old sinful nature and putting on the new life in Christ. It is a continual process of growth in holiness, empowered by the Holy Spirit, as believers yield to His guidance and live according to God's Word.
3. **Continual Self-Examination And Spiritual Growth:** Christians are called to regularly examine their hearts and lives to ensure they are aligned with God's will. Maintaining spiritual disciplines such as prayer, studying Scripture, and being accountable within the body of Christ helps believers grow spiritually and keep their inner and outer lives pure, reflecting the character of Christ.

Applications:

1. **Prioritize Inner Transformation Over Outward Appearance:** It is easy to focus on how others perceive us, but true change must begin in the heart. Take time to examine your inner life regularly through prayer and reflection, allowing God to cleanse and transform you from the inside out. Focus on developing godly character, not just external behaviors.
2. **Embrace Ongoing Sanctification:** Sanctification is a lifelong journey. Make it a daily practice to put off sinful habits and attitudes by submitting to the Holy Spirit's guidance. Consciously replace negative behaviors with Christ-like virtues, striving to grow in holiness and align your life more closely with God's Word.
3. **Stay Accountable And Committed To Spiritual Disciplines:** Engage in spiritual disciplines like regular Bible study, prayer, and fellowship with other believers to maintain spiritual growth. Join a community of believers that encourages accountability, where you can receive encouragement, correction, and support as you continue to pursue a Christ-like life.

Questions:

1. What does the lesson teach about the importance of inner transformation?
2. According to Jesus, what is necessary to enter the kingdom of God?
3. What role does baptism play in the process of being born again?
4. How does the Holy Spirit contribute to sanctification?
5. Why is self-examination important for spiritual growth?
6. What is the purpose of "putting off the old man" in the process of sanctification?
7. How can believers replace sinful habits with godly behaviors?
8. What is the significance of the "fruit of the Spirit" in a Christian's life?
9. How does accountability within the body of Christ contribute to spiritual growth?
10. What is the relationship between sanctification and living a transformed life?