

Living Without a Clean Heart

Galatians 5

Sermon Transcript by Rev. Ernest O'Neill

It's so easy to say casually, "Oh Stephanie" -- and I apologize to all Stephanies but, "Stephanie is all right, but she exaggerates a little." It's so easy to say that and you think, "Yeah, what's wrong with that?" But you really are stealing her reputation, aren't you? Because actually the person that you're speaking to doesn't know quite what you mean by "she does exaggerate a little" and you may mean she exaggerates 'that' little and they may mean she exaggerates 'that' little and actually it's stealing Stephanie's reputation, it is.

Because the other person from that moment on is looking out for Stephanie's exaggeration and actually doesn't listen to Stephanie, if you're honest - and ever after that remembers your comment. So when you steal somebody's reputation like that or if you steal from the IRS by fudging on the medical expenses or the business expenses or you do something in real resentment against an associate or an acquaintance and you find that the resentment is growing almost to a hatred. When you do those things loved ones, all of those things, all of those sins, even though they may occur in your head or in your emotions or in your words, they all come from your heart. They come from your heart. That's what Jesus said you remember. He said, "It's out of the heart of man that come the things that defile him, anger and hatred and fornication and murder and adultery and slander and false witness, these are the things that come from the heart of the man and these are the things that defile him."

You may say, "No, no, no, those are just chance events in my life that are provoked by the circumstances that I live in. They don't really come from my heart", but Jesus says, "Yes, they do, and they indicate what you really are like deep down", and you and I like to say, "No, no, they don't. We just flip them off. They're flippant. We don't really mean those things. Actually we're very very nice inside", but Jesus says, "No, no. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit and fresh spring doesn't produce sweet water and sour water at the same time. No, what is in your outward life is an indication of what is in your heart because it all comes from your heart."

You may say, "Well, I mean what did He mean 'by the heart'?" Well, not the blood pump obviously, not the physical blood pump that we talk about in heart transplants today, but the same as what you and I mean when we say, "Look, let's get to the heart of the matter." You know what we mean when we say that, "let's get to the heart of the matter", we mean let's get to the very essence of this matter. Let's get to the inner issue in this situation, let's get to the very center of this situation, that's what the heart is loved ones, in the Bible.

Your heart is the very center of you, yourself. It's the very essence of you. It's the very inner core of your being and that's why Jesus wanted to make it so clear to us that the things we do outwardly are not just chance responses to circumstances. They're not just chance happenings, they actually do express what we are inside. Somebody has said, "When you squeeze an orange, the juice squirts out", you squeeze it and what is inside comes out, that's what happens. The circumstances and events of our lives push us into different situations, we're squeezed and what is really in our hearts, comes out and shows itself in our responses and our reactions that we did not have time to

prepare beforehand.

Now the truth is of course, an out-and-out crook says, "Yeah, that's right. That's what my heart's like. I killed a guy because I hate him. I wanted rid of him", or, "I steal because it's the only way to get money. Nobody else will take care of me and it's the only way to survive in this place", so an out-and-out crook won't argue with that at all. He'll say, "That's right. What I do on the outside is what is in my heart."

It's very interesting but a respectable church-goer who hasn't necessarily dealt with Jesus will probably say the same kind of thing. He'll say, "Well yeah, I may not be perfect but I live in a dog-eat-dog world and the only way to survive is to stand up for yourself and that's what I do." So it's interesting that neither of those people will be too concerned about the problems they have with their unclean heart -- but any of you here this morning who believe Jesus is God's Son and who have confessed your sins to God and have repented of them and have some awareness of Jesus' Spirit, to you, an unclean heart within you will seem like a blatant contradiction of your claim to be borne of God.

And so an unclean heart isn't a trouble to anybody but a person who has started to be aware that God is real and has started to try to obey Him and I think many of us are in that situation. We have found that there is something inside us that doesn't seem to want to do what we know we should be doing and increasingly, as the years have passed, we found there has developed within us something that is unclean inside, something that actually does not want God and we've come to the point in our lives where we cry out a cry that wasn't spoken by a child of God at all but that was spoken by a Jew trying to live under the law and we find we're crying out, "I don't understand my own actions. I do not do the good that I want but I do the very thing I hate."

So, many of us who are born of God, who have received the Spirit of Jesus into us and who try to read the Bible and who try to pray day-by-day, many of us have found that there is still within us, an unclean heart. There's something within us that has started to make our life with God a kind of uphill struggle, that contrasts so clearly with our experience at the beginning because when we first sensed Jesus' Spirit, it seemed to be easy and natural to obey Him and we seem to just zoom along, it was so easy. What was inside seemed to be all sweet and fragrant but gradually as the years have passed, we have begun to find there's something inside, like a kind of weight inside. A kind of drag on us and we've begun to find, it's more like climbing up a steep hill to obey God. You know what you should do but you don't seem able to do it because your heart is not going the same way as your will wants to go.

For many of us it's like a kind of computer inside that has kind of a bug in the memory system and we're going along and we meet suddenly a person who is very blunt and very argumentative and we know we should be able to punch up the gentle, peaceful Spirit of Jesus from our hearts and we punch the right button but there's something wrong inside and the old memory storage seems to send up an attitude of 'Give him as good as you get' and you can't hold it back and it's as if your storage of feelings inside store different ones from the ones you used to experience. Or you're passing by a magazine stand and you see the magazine with the picture on it and you try to punch up the Spirit of Jesus' love for that dear person on the magazine cover but something goes wrong inside and that storage sends up on the screen of your imagination all kinds of lustful thoughts and actions that can't possibly co-exist with the Spirit of Jesus.

Loved ones, that's the key to the up and down life, that last sentence. That's why many of us who

are Christians have an up and down, spirit and flesh, in and out Christian life because Jesus' Spirit cannot co-exist with evil. His Spirit cannot co-exist with evil. In other words, His Spirit cannot dwell in an unclean heart.

Now you may say to me, "But brother, I know that I have received the Spirit of Jesus. I know that I've sensed at times, Jesus' motivation and impulses within me. I know that. I know that I have done some things according to His will. Now, is that not real?" Yes, yes, it is real. God's Spirit did regenerate your spirit, that's why you're aware of God, that's why you can even understand the things I am talking about this morning.

God's Spirit regenerated your spirit, made it alive and made it aware of God and aware of Jesus and His Spirit made your spirit new but your spirit still separates itself from God's Holy Spirit when it chooses. That's it. Your spirit is alive to God but when it chooses, it resists God's Holy Spirit and while it has that attitude to God's Holy Spirit, God's own Holy Spirit is a guest in your heart that is driven out and brought in, driven out and brought in.

No, you're still born of God. Your own spirit is still alive. But the Holy Spirit is not able to dwell in your heart because your heart is not clean and you have not allowed it to be made clean. So there's an inconstant Christian life, up and down, up and down, not a constant Christian life that comes from the indwelling Spirit of God.

In other words, God's Holy Spirit has to act upon you from outside. Here's the way Andrew Murray puts the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Many of you have maybe wondered, "Well now, what was the difference between the working of the Holy Spirit in the Old Covenant and the working in the New Covenant?" Because that's something of the difference between a constant Christian life and an inconstant Christian life.

This book loved ones is just a good one called 'The Spirit of Christ' by Andrew Murray and I'll just read you two sentences, "In the Old Testament, we have the Spirit of God coming upon men and working on them in special times and ways, working from above without and within. In the New, we have the Holy Spirit entering them and dwelling with them" -- you see, not working upon them from without as He did on prophets and kings and priests at special times but the Holy Spirit in the New, coming and dwelling within them, working from within, without and upwards. "In the former, we have the Spirit of God as the almighty and holy one, in the latter we have the Spirit of the Father of Jesus Christ."

Now the fact is those of us with unclean hearts are somewhere between the Old Testament and the New, that's it. We've experienced the forgiveness of sins of the Old Testament and something of the regeneration of the New but not the full indwelling that God planned for us.

You remember it's what we said in that Ezekiel Chapter 36. You remember God gave the promise of the New Covenant and He said, "I will put a new spirit within you", that's, "I'll regenerate your spirit. I'll make it alive and new", and then He says, "And I will put a new heart within you because I will put My Spirit within you", that is the Holy Spirit.

Now loved ones if your heart is not clean, your spirit is renewed and you have periodic experiences of the Holy Spirit's action upon your spirit but you do not have a constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit within. He is not in fact at home in your heart. He is a guest and He cannot be at home until your spirit has finally given up the right ever to resist Him and until you have been prepared to

make your heart absolutely what He wants it to be.

Now you may say to me, "Now, do you not think that in the first century, they experienced the whole ball of wax at one moment? Do you not think that? Do you not think that in the first century, the Holy Spirit came upon them, regenerated them, made them alive in their spirits, and cleansed their heart and came and dwelt with them permanently from then on?" Yes, that undoubtedly happened.

If you want to look at one of the times loved ones, it's that kind of anomaly in a way that took place in Cornelius's house, Acts 10:44. Cornelius was a centurion you remember, who certainly is talked about as a God-fearing man but there isn't clear evidence that he was a Christian though one can't be sure, but he invited you remember, Peter to speak at his house.

Acts 10:44, "While Peter was still saying this", that's while he was still preaching the Gospel, "The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word and the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God", and so it all happened at once there. I mean it's strange but it seemed the first time they heard the Gospel, the Holy Spirit fell upon them and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and they were baptized into Jesus' name and everything took place at once.

But as you saw in that preview you got in Acts 9:17, it didn't happen that way with Paul. Paul you remember, met Jesus first on the Damascus road and then three days later this happened in Acts 9:17, "So Ananias departed and entered the house and laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

So it happened both ways in the New Testament. So if you're in the position where you believe you're a child of God and you're born of God and you're aware of Jesus and you regard Him as your Savior and you know your sins are forgiven and yet you still are aware you have an unclean heart, see that so were some people in the New Testament -- and yet obviously some other people entered into the whole thing at once because referring to the situation in Cornelius's household, you remember Peter said, "And God made no distinction between them and us but cleansed their hearts by faith."

So some people have experienced it all at once but many of us, and I suspect many here this morning, have not experienced the clean heart. But isn't the truth this, not how should it happen or how did it normally happen -- because that isn't going to give us any assurance anyway -- but examine your own heart. What is the state of your own heart? Does your heart immediately expel a thought or feeling of pride or jealousy or anger when it occurs, does it? Or does it welcome it and entertain it and relish it and nourish it?

Well, if it does, your heart isn't clean. That's simple, and you're walking with a heaviness inside you that you don't need to walk with and that you can't victoriously with. Do you find that your heart automatically sends Jesus' sentiments up to your will so that it is easy and natural to be like Jesus? Or do you find that your heart is sending up to your will, all kinds of things that your conscience is condemning and indeed, your will cannot handle these things and it's constantly trying to repress them and at times fails to repress them and they burst out into outward sin and stain your conscience.

Well, if that's the situation loved ones, you're living the Christian life the hard way and your

heart is not clean and the truth is that the New Covenant is a message that God is able to cleanse our hearts and in fact why many of us here walk with unclean hearts for so many years is because we don't understand what the real New Covenant, New Testament Gospel is, and that's true loved ones.

I think many of us have had preached to us only the Old Covenant. Let me show you the Old Covenant and you'll know what I mean, it's the one preached by John the Baptist. Mark 1:4, and I think this will surprise you loved ones because this is the Old Covenant. This, don't forget was John the Baptist as a Jewish preacher preaching.

Mark 1:4, "John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins", that was it. That was the Old Covenant. Preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. Now I wonder how many of us entered into that thinking that's the New Covenant. We repent to have our sins forgiven, that's it and the joy of being in Jesus is constantly thanking Him for forgiving us our sins. Well, the Jews knew that.

The people that were baptized by John the Baptist before Jesus ever died, they knew that. That's the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a few verses down, Mark 1:8, John makes the distinction himself. He says, "I have baptized you with water but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit", that's the New Covenant. If you want to know what baptized is, it's 'immerse' -- not the water, we're not arguing about immersing in water or sprinkling -- the Greek word means 'Immersed in the Holy Spirit'. Immersed, totally immersed in the Holy Spirit -- with the result that took place you remember, in Cornelius's household where Peter says, "God gave the Holy Spirit to them as He did to us, made no distinction between them and us but cleansed their hearts by faith." By immersing completely in the Holy Spirit, the heart is cleansed by faith.

And yet you know that our society is full of all of us bleating away to each other that "your problem is guilt, your problem if guilt. You can have your sins forgiven." We know fine well this permissive society doesn't have a great guilt problem. This permissive society has one problem, "How do I do what I know I should do?" "How do I do what I know I should do, how can I live the way I know I should live?", and loved ones, the guilt problem was what the Old Covenant took care of. The New Covenant takes care of the clean heart. It cleanses your heart through the baptism of the Holy Spirit so that you have a center of motivations and attitudes that are pure like Jesus.

But the problem with so many of us is we don't realize that it's received by faith. We believe we receive our forgiveness of sins by faith and then you know what we do. You know what we do. We say, "All right, I received the forgiveness of sins by faith. I know I am on my way to heaven, now I've got to work on my unclean heart", isn't that right?

I mean how many of us believe that we can receive a clean heart by faith? We don't. We believe we work on an unclean heart by amateur psychology and group rationalization. That's it, and because we haven't experienced the miraculous deliverance from the unclean heart, the only way we can align ourselves with the Bible standards is by lowering those standards and so that's what we do. You know we fill each other's heads with the thoughts, "Anger is okay. You can't get over it. Let's face it. It's just human. Gossip is okay. Let's face it, you can't get over it, an odd unclean thought, it's human. You can't get over those things. A little slander, a little jealousy, you can't help it. Those are normal human feelings and you'll always have them." Isn't that the way we talk? So we excuse anger and we excuse gossip and we excuse sarcasm and we excuse slick asides to other people and gradually the whole life in Christ lowers and lowers and lowers.

Loved ones, you may say, "I believe what you say. I believe Acts 15:9. I believe that God can give the Holy Spirit to us and He can cleanse our hearts by faith. I believe that. I believe it's possible to live that way. Now, how am I going to move towards that? How am I going to move towards the full consecration that enables God to do this miracle in me?"

Loved ones, first of all call sin, sin. Call sin, sin. Stop looking at things that you do wrong or feelings that you have that are wrong and excusing them as shortcomings or as little weaknesses in your humanity or as little characteristics that occur because of your background. Stop that. Stop saying, "Oh well, I am a Swede you know and I am a bit incommunicative, not unloving, just incommunicative", stop saying that.

Stop saying, "Oh well, I have an artistic kind of temperament you know, and I am a little fiery, not angry, I am a little fiery at times", stop that. Say, "I am angry", that's sin. Unlovingness, that's sin. Stop saying, "Well, I am a student you know and I am a transient, not uncommitted. I am a transient, I am just transient", No, say you're uncommitted. Call it sin. Old marrieds, "Well, no, I am not ungenerous to God financially, I am just prudent at this time of my life." No, no, just call it sin.

Young marrieds, "I am not ungenerous but we just have to get the necessities you know, get ourselves together", no, no, call that sin. Call sin, sin. That's the first thing. Call sin, sin. You can afford to do it because there's a cure for it and a remedy for it. You only have to pretend if there's no remedy. If there's no remedy but the amateur psychology and the mutual reinforcement groups then you have to avoid calling it sin, but call sin, sin, that's the first thing. Be real about the things in your life that are sin. And see secondly that sin cannot be justified. You can't justify sin.

Some of us you know, take First John 1:8, "If we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us", that is, we have never sinned and we have no unconscious sin. All of us have unconscious sin, every one of us. So in that sense, none of us can say, "We have no sin." All of us have unconscious sin that we have not seen yet and we cannot deal with until it becomes conscious but see very clearly loved ones that the normal Christian life is defined in two verses in scripture, one is in James, "Whoever knows what is right to do and does not do it, for him it is sin." So if you know something is wrong and you don't do it, that's sin, conscious sin not unconscious sin, that's still sin but conscious sin is what God is concerned about. That's what you have control of and First John 3:9, "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin." You don't commit sin if you're born of God.

Loved ones, hold to that, hold to that. Don't justify sin. Keep calling it sin. Why? Because the door to full consecration is continual repentance, that's it. That's why the Beatitude says, "Blessed are they that mourn," -- mourn for their sin -- "for they shall be comforted." The door to full consecration is continual repentance. In other words it's not, "Well, I am the way you said I am, I am in that situation and I know it'll be a miracle so I'll wait for the miracle", no, no, the way into the miracle, the way into the place of full consecration where the Holy Spirit can cleanse your heart by faith is by continual honest repentance day-by-day-by-day.

I'll read it to you because I thought it was important to put it as exactly as I could.

"Impenitence", that is lack of penitence, Impenitence, un-repentance, "Impenitence is not due simply to repeated sinning", it isn't. See, you may say, "Well, from what you're saying if I am sinning all the time, there's no hope", no, "impenitence is not due simply to repeated sinning but to the growing tolerance of that sinning as a necessity," see that?

It's not just that you're sinning repeatedly -- but impenitence, the time when your conscience become seared and when you get to the point where you can no longer come to a place of full consecration -- is when you regard that sinning as a necessity in your life and you begin to tolerate it. "Impenitence is due not simply to repeated sinning but to the growing tolerance of that sinning as a necessity -- to the acceptance of the idea that we can't stop, to the regarding of sin as normal rather than abnormal, as natural rather than alien. However often we sin if we set our hearts against it with all our being and regard it as something that we must get rid of, not only will God forgive us until 70 times 7 but He will lead us to ask the all important question which is the key to deliverance, 'Why can I not stop?' "

That's it loved ones. There's no point you know in crying out this morning and saying, "Brother, by what you're saying, there's no hope for any of us because I sin", but loved ones, it isn't the sinning. It's what the old Saint says, "It's not the falling but it's the refusal to get up and go every time you fall and to believe that there comes a time when you do not need to fall", that's it. That's what repentance is.

Repentance is not never sinning at this point in your life, before your heart is cleansed -- but it is a refusal to accept sinning as normal in your life. It is a refusal to reject the word of God. It is a constant belief that the normal Christian life is one that is free from unclean hearts and free from unclean life and that is the way into the place of full consecration.

It is a desperate crying out to God, it isn't the crying out to man. "Why? Why can I not stop sinning?" While you're crying out to man, while you're having little counseling sessions, while you're reading the books, while you're talking to other people saying, "Why can I not stop sinning even though I am a Christian", while you're doing that, you're just pretending, you're just pretending. While you're trying to justify your situation, you're not even serious. But when you're desperate enough to cry out to the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, why can I not stop this? Why?" Then you're coming into the place of full consecration where the dear Holy Spirit Himself can begin to deal with you and can explain to you in what ways your heart is not clean for Him to dwell and He will explain it to you loved ones because He wants to dwell in your heart. Your heart was made for His indwelling, that's why your heart is there.

You were made for the Holy Spirit of God to stay and dwell and live within you day after day, night after night, moment by moment and the Holy Spirit's dearest desire is to come there and make that His home. You remember, it was Judas -- not Iscariot but the other Judas -- that said to Jesus, "Lord, how are You going to show Yourself to us and not to the rest of the world", and Jesus said, "I'll tell you. If a man loves Me, he will keep My words and My Father will love him and We will come and make Our home in his heart", that's it. The Holy Spirit will come and dwell constantly in your heart and fill your heart with the fragrance and the beauty and the purity of Jesus, if you will ask Him to come in and cleanse your heart of all that is self and all that is ungodly and all that is other than Jesus. Loved ones, He will do it.

So I wanted to try you know, to help those of you who wondered, "Well, how do I live with an unclean heart?" Well, the truth is, you can't live too long that way loved ones, it eventually overcomes anything that's good in you at all but the way to live with an unclean heart until it becomes clean is by constant repentance that is an attitude. It is not simply an action, it is an attitude. It is an attitude of declared, relentless antagonism to sin, that's it. That's what repentance is. It's a declared, relentless antagonism and hostility to sin that will not accept sin as normal. "I won't

accept it!" I don't want to blaspheme but a bit like the guy in the movie. "I am mad as hell and I won't put up with it anymore. I won't! This is Satan within me. I am not tolerating it. Lord, I know I can be free from this and I confess this sin to You but I know Lord it goes deeper than this. This came up from my unclean heart. This came with such a surge of power that my will could not control it. Lord I ask You, Holy Spirit, will You reveal to me why I can't stop this? Will You reveal what uncleanness in my heart has to go because I know the moment I am willing to let it go, that moment You take it away", and that's it.

But I'll tell you it's a different life. It's a different life. Instead of poison coming up from inside that you have to hold down with all your power, beauty and purity and love from Jesus' own heart comes up from inside. You can see why I said to you last Sunday, "It's your own fault then if you sin", it is, because the will is receiving thoughts that are loving and kind and pure and naturally, spontaneously Christ-like. So the will is dumb if it doesn't say, "Oh, go through, go through", and that's why such an effortless life when Jesus cleanses you through the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

So loved ones, will you walk on and next Sunday I'll try to talk a little more but it's not talk you know, it's you and the Holy Spirit, He will do it. He will be faithful with you as He has been with so many of us. Let us pray.

Dear Father, we thank You for the New Covenant, the New Testament. We thank You for the real Gospel. We thank You Lord that our sins were forgiven in Your name because of Your death, just as the Jewish sins were forgiven in Your name because of Your death, but Lord we thank You that since Your resurrection, there is also available to us the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. Lord that we do not need simply to experience Him from a far-off as the Old Testament people did, but that He comes and dwells within a cleansed heart.

So Lord, we want that. We want our hearts cleansed by faith so that You, Holy Spirit, can dwell constantly and uninterruptedly within us. So we ask You dear Holy Spirit to start explaining to us why there are certain things in our lives that we can't stop. Will You show us our hearts, reveal to us the uncleanness there, much of it we can't even see yet, and take us to the very bottom of our hearts until we yield it all to You and give up the right ever to resist You again. We ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus.

Now the grace of our Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with each one of us, now and evermore. Amen.