

Defilement Of The Heart

INTRODUCTION:

- I. The Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus preached to His disciples early during His ministry, begins with those familiar verses we call "The Beatitudes."
 - A. The Bible doesn't call these verses "The Beatitudes," but there's still a good reason why that word best describes these wonderful teachings.
 1. The word "Beatitude" is from the Latin "beatus" (be-A-tus) meaning "blessing" or "happy."
 2. Those opening verses of the Sermon on the Mount are called "The Beatitudes" because Jesus repeatedly used the word "blessed."
 - a. He was describing character traits He expects to see in the lives of those who would be His disciples, and the corresponding "blessings" that are associated with those traits.
 3. Jesus said He expected His disciples to be:
 - a. Poor in spirit – meaning, one who is humble and cognizant of their own spiritual poverty – and theirs will be *"the kingdom of heaven."*

- b. One who mourns – meaning one who truly mourns and experiences deep regret over the sin in their life – and *"they shall be comforted."*
 - c. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness – who have a overwhelming desire to be righteous in the sight of God – and *"they shall be filled."*
 - d. And many other character traits as well.
4. Unfortunately, many people don't realize the extent of their spiritual poverty, and therefore see no need to grieve over anything in their lives.
- a. They measure themselves by others in the world, and conclude "I'm not as bad as THOSE people are."
 - b. And so, they have convinced themselves that they are okay.
- B. We all wrestle with being the kind of person the Lord expects of those who would be His disciples.
1. And the problem lies within our own hearts:
- a. **Ecclesiastes 9:3** – *"This is an evil in all that is done under the sun: that one thing happens to all. Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead."*

- b. **Jeremiah 17:9-10** – *"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? 10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings."*

II. Jesus knows the hearts of men because He has the ability to see into the dark recesses of your heart and mine.

A. In the seventh chapter of the gospel of Mark, Jesus taught a sobering lesson about the reality of "The Defilement of the Heart."

1. Jesus had just been confronted by a group of Pharisees who chided Him and His disciples for breaking a long-held tradition of washing their hands in a ceremonial way before they ate.
2. **Mark 7:3-4** – *For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash their hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders. 4 When they come from the marketplace, they do not eat unless they wash. And there are many other things which they have received and hold, like the washing of cups, pitchers, copper vessels, and couches.*
3. In the verses that follow we have an interesting dialogue between Jesus and this group of Pharisees.
4. But it's what Jesus had to say to His disciples afterward that I want us to consider in this lesson.

BODY:

- I. As we look at the first part of Mark chapter seven we see this confrontation between Jesus and a group of Pharisees and scribes.
 - A. They specifically challenged Jesus with these words: **Mark 7:5** – *"Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?"*
 1. It wasn't that the Lord's disciples were practicing unsanitary eating conditions by not washing their hands before they ate.
 2. The issue was washing their hands in what verse 3 says is *"a special way."*
 - a. This "special way" of washing hands had become a matter of tradition among the Pharisees in which small amounts of water were poured over each hand and each hand was washed by twisting the fist in the palm of the other.
 - b. There is no way this kind of hand-washing would ever remove filth – but then, that wasn't the purpose.
 - c. This method of hand-washing practiced by the Pharisees was believed to remove demons from their hands so that they wouldn't accidentally ingest a demon when eating.

- d. It was widely believed in that day that people became demon-possessed because they accidentally ingested demons by failing to ceremonially cleanse their hands.
 - e. Keep this in mind, because it's going to make more sense when we see what Jesus had to say to His disciples later about spiritual defilement.
- B. And so, Jesus replied by charging these Pharisees with being like the wicked people hundreds of years earlier in the days of Isaiah.
1. **Mark 7:6-8** – *He answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. 7 And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' 8 For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men — the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do."*
 2. By the way, Jesus wasn't speaking about denominationalism and all its man-made creeds and man-made doctrines in these verses.
 - a. Rather, He was speaking to God's people who had perverted the simple teachings of the Law by coming up with all kinds of legalistic interpretations of the Law.

- b. There's a very important message here for us. We need to be careful that we don't take a simple Biblical principle and run amuck by coming up with our own legalistic interpretations of what God really means to say.
 - b. And don't think for a moment that brethren haven't done that.
 - c. It's sad but true – Pharisaism is alive and well in the Lord's church today.
3. And so, to show these Pharisees how they twisted the Scriptures to suit their own narrow interpretations, Jesus gave them an example.
- a. **Mark 7:9-13** – *He said to them, "All too well you reject the commandment of God, that you may keep your tradition. 10 For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 11 But you say, 'If a man says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is Corban" — ' (that is, a gift to God), 12 then you no longer let him do anything for his father or his mother, 13 making the word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such things you do."*

- C. Let me take this example and put it into language we can all understand.
1. If these Pharisees were with us today in the church, here's how they would have reasoned.
 - a. The apostle Paul wrote: **Ephesians 6:2-3** – *"Honor your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: 3 "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."*
 - b. Paul also wrote: **1 Timothy 5:8** – *But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.*
 - c. However, the apostle Paul also commanded: **1 Corinthians 16:2** – *On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper...*
 - d. And: **2 Corinthians 9:7** – *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*
 2. However, the Pharisee would ask, "what is a man to do if he can't afford to financially take care of his mother and father and fulfill his duty to give to the Lord on the first day of the week" – something every Christian was commanded to do?

- a. Do you give to mom and dad, or do you give to God?
 - b. Under the Old Testament Law of Moses a tenth was absolutely required of every man – so what does he do if he can't do both?
3. How would you answer that question? Do you give to mom and dad or do you give to the Lord and trust the Lord to take care of mom and dad?
 4. Well, the Pharisee would tell you that you must give to God, and then tell mom and dad, "Sorry. There's nothing left for you."
- II. However, the part of Mark chapter seven I want us to concentrate on are the verses that follow.
- A. After Jesus rebuffed the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, He turned to the multitude and said:
 1. **Mark 7:14-16** – *"Hear Me, everyone, and understand: 15 There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. 16 If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!"*
 - a. Unfortunately, the Lord's disciples didn't understand what He meant by this.

- b. So when they were all alone in a house, they asked Him to explain what He meant.
2. Therefore, Jesus said, **Mark 7:18-23** – *"Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, 19 because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?" 20 And He said, "What comes out of a man, that defiles a man.*
- 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. 23 All these evil things come from within and defile a man."*
- B. If you recall what we said earlier about the Pharisee's belief regarding eating without first ceremonially cleansing your hands, then this makes sense.
1. The word "defile" Jesus used in these verses means "to taint or tarnish, to corrupt or pollute."
 2. Jesus assured His disciples that spiritual defilement – or spiritual corruption and pollution – doesn't come by accidentally ingesting demons.

- a. No one is spiritually defiled as a result of what enters the mouth – whether or not you wash your hands in a ceremonial way.
 - b. You might experience a real bad case of physical defilement by ingesting harmful bacteria, but you won't be spiritually defiled.
3. Spiritual defilement is a condition of the heart – it's the condition of one whose heart has become defiled.
- a. The things you eat aren't going to affect your heart in a spiritual way – they enter the stomach and are digested and pass through your system.
4. Spiritual defilement, according to Jesus, comes from a heart that is filled with sin.
5. Jesus described a heart filled with:
- a. Evil thoughts – thoughts that produce evil words and evil actions such as:
 - b. Adulteries – thoughts that will lead a married person to have unlawful sexual relations with another.
 - c. Fornications – thoughts that will lead to all sorts of illicit sexual activities (including pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and all other forms of sexual immorality).

- d. Murders – thoughts of revenge that lead to intentionally taking the life of another.
- e. Thefts – thoughts of stealing – of taking those things that do not belong to you (which includes shoplifting, fraud, even defrauding our government when it comes to paying taxes).
- f. Covetousness – thoughts of greediness, which is a form of idolatry.
- g. Wickedness – thoughts of any evil act done with malice.
- h. Deceit – thoughts of one who is intent on deceiving or defrauding another (including lying).
- i. Lewdness – thoughts of practicing unrestrained immoral behavior.
- j. An evil eye - a Hebrew idiom for stinginess and greed.
- k. Blasphemy – thoughts of slander, or of verbal abuse against God or man.
- l. Pride – thoughts of arrogance, where one has a boastful opinion of themselves, often with contempt toward others.
- m. Foolishness – thoughts that simply lack of common sense, or a person who lacks moral and spiritual insensitivity.

C. But the big question is: How do all these things enter our heart?

1. The answer is: We put them there!

- a. We allow ourselves to see things we shouldn't see, and hear things we shouldn't hear.
 - b. And then we allow ourselves to think things we shouldn't think about.
 - c. Then we allow ourselves to do things we shouldn't do.
2. Our outward actions are the direct result of things we allow into our hearts.
 3. And whatever we allow into our hearts will eventually come forth out of our heart – in our speech and in our actions.

III. Mankind has been plagued with this kind of "heart problem" since the beginning of time.

A. Just look at all the examples throughout the Scriptures:

1. Before the flood: **Genesis 6:5** – *Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*
2. After the flood, Noah offered a sacrifice to God: **Genesis 8:21** – *And the Lord smelled a soothing aroma. Then the Lord said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done.*

3. In fact, James, the Lord's brother, wrote: **James 1:13-15** – *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. 15 Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.*
 4. The apostle Paul wrote: **Romans 3:23** – *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...*
 5. Paul also warned us: **Romans 5:12** – *...thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...*
 6. And the reason is simply because: **Romans 6:23a** – *For the wages of sin is death...*
- B. The bottom line is that we are all plagued with the desire to see things we shouldn't see, think things we shouldn't think about, and eventually we all do things we shouldn't do.
1. And unless we find a solution to this problem, we will not only die spiritually, we will die eternally – forever separated from the God of heaven.
 2. So, what is the solution? How do we find a cure for the problem of having allowed sin into our hearts?

C. The solution is Jesus Christ!

1. **John 8:31-36** – *Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. 32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." 33 They answered Him, "We are Abraham's descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?" 34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

2. How does Jesus make us free?

a. He frees us from the guilt of sin through His blood:

Ephesians 1:7 – *In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace...*

b. He frees us from bondage of sin through the Holy Spirit:

Romans 8:12-13 – *Therefore, brethren, we are debtors — not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

- (1). We *"live by the Spirit"* when we live according to the Spirit-given Word contained in the teachings of Jesus and the apostles found in the New Testament.

CONCLUSION:

- I. When we look back at the things Jesus said about sin in the heart, how aware are we of sin in our own lives?
 - A. We can't address a problem until we're first ready to admit we have one.
 1. Therefore, we need to take a careful inventory of our own lives to see if we have allowed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, and all those other sins to enter our heart.
 2. If we have – and chances are there is at least one of these lurking in the dark recesses of our hearts – then we need to do something about it now.
 3. We need to remember that the only solution is to allow the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ to cleanse us of that defilement.
 - a. The blood of Christ can initially cleanse us through coming to Jesus Christ in baptism – having our sins washed away in the same manner as Ananias told Saul of Tarsus in **Acts 22:16**.

- b. And then the blood of Christ can continually cleans us from all sin by confessing new sins to God – just as John said we need to do in **1 John 1:9**.
- B. Even though the solution to sin sounds so simple, the reality is that the cost for our redemption was Jesus dying on the cross.
 - 1. We would have no possibility of redemption if Jesus Christ has not left heaven, taken upon Himself the form of man, suffered the unspeakable agony and horror of the cross, and eventually die.
 - 2. Sin is not something to be taken lightly – it cost Jesus His life.
 - 3. Why not take advantage right now of the solution Jesus offers from the sin in your life through His own suffering and death.