

**Grace to You :: *esp Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time***

## **The Inside Story on Defilement**

Scripture: Mark 7:14–23

Code: 41-33

I want you to open your Bible to the seventh chapter of Mark as we continue to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in His life and ministry in this wonderful history written by Mark. We are in chapter 7, and the text of verses 14 to 23 is our text for this morning.

It again is a very, very important portion of Scripture. It is paralleled in Matthew as well. It is a very, very definitive portion of Scripture. You might even conclude that of all of the teaching places in the gospels, this has to rank as one of the most important because it is so defining, and we'll see that as we look at it.

I've entitled the text, "The Inside Story of Defilement." The Inside Story of Defilement. I suppose if you lived fifty years ago to a hundred years ago, you might not understand how really defiled the world is, how really defiled the human race is. You might be limited to the people in your little world and you would only experience extraordinary evil in your community when extraordinary evil happened, or in your circle of friends, or within the framework of your knowledge. But living in the world we live in today, it's really had to hide how wretched man is.

There are not a lot of defenders anymore of the goodness of man. We all, because of mass media and because of ubiquitous cameras everywhere - every human hand on the planet, I think, has a camera in it in the form of a cell phone. And we have cameras watching us everywhere we go in every building along the streets and at the intersections and just about everywhere else. We are, then, fully informed on the evil of mankind. We know the world is full of defilement. We know it is full of corruption. We know that evil runs deep and it runs wide. We understand that. It is inescapable.

And the question, then, is no longer is there evil in the world, but the question is where does it come from, what is the cause of evil, what is the point of origination of evil. Well, I don't really think that psychologists any longer are interested in trying to defend the fact that extraordinary evil is only done by some sort of extraordinary human beings who are outside the pale of normalcy. I think that's gone by the wayside. I think we're pretty well acquainted with the fact that seemingly normal people can do things that are horrendously evil. Seemingly normal people are engaged, if not in the purveying of evil, in being entertained by things that are vile and wretched. I think we now know that evil is pervasive throughout our society and that even ordinary people can do things that are extraordinarily corrupt.

All of that came clear to a psychologist by the name of James Waller in the year 2002. He published a psychological book, the title of it, *Becoming Evil - Becoming Evil*. The subtitle, *How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing*. The thesis of the book is that extraordinary evil can be done by what are apparently ordinary people, that extraordinary evil does not arise out of some human abnormality but rather extreme evil can be done by very common, normal people.

That's the unsettling results of the study that is behind the book, extraordinary evil arises from

ordinary people. There's no way to escape that anymore and that is correct. But that poses the question: What causes this? Why does it happen? Where does it come from?

Following up on that book was a book written in the year 2007 by a social psychologist by the name of Philip Zimbardo. In that work, titled *The Lucifer Effect*, subtitle *Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*, he concludes that this pervasive far-reaching problem in our society is environmental. That is, what corrupts us is outside of us. We are all exposed to hostile and I guess you could call them acidic situations we find ourselves in, and our proclivity for evil, our ranging far from human goodness into extreme evil is the result of overexposure to things that are outside of us.

Now, this is in direct conflict with the Bible. The Bible says our problem is not outside of us, our problem is inside of us. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart of man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." That's the collective heart. Men are wicked. "There's none righteous, no, not one." We are capable without any outside influences, according to James 1:14, of conceiving lust in our hearts, turning it into sinful attitudes that become sinful acts - deadly sinful acts. Sin works its way from the inside out.

That is a definitive Christian view of man. That is a biblical anthropology that what defiles is on the inside, not the outside. Society doesn't want to admit that. You hear people being interviewed all the time in our society who say well, the reason I did this, the reason I have this problem, the reason I have this anti-social or criminal behavior or bizarre behavior is because I was misunderstood as a child. I was molested as a child. I was denied privileges as a child. I was unloved as a child. I was bullied - that's the latest one.

All of these kinds of external things have created this kind of behavior because I've lived in this toxic kind of environment. That is not what the Bible teaches. The problem is not outside of you, the problem is inside of you.

Listen to the words of Mark beginning in verse 14, speaking of Jesus, "He called the crowd to Him again, and began saying to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him. But the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.'" And then verse 16, "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear." There's a note on that. While certainly Jesus said that many times, it doesn't appear to be in the better manuscripts here but in some manuscripts, and thus it's included in brackets. "When He had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable."

The parable being the words in verse 15. "And He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him because it doesn't go into his heart but into his stomach and is eliminated,' and thus He declared all foods clean. And He was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man for from within, out of the heart of men proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.'"

Five times in that passage you have a form of the word "defile" from the verb *koinoō*. It means to be dirty, to be unclean, to be impure, to be corrupt, to be defiled, used often in the New Testament, very frequently in the New Testament. Even more frequently, the Hebrew counterpart of that word *chalah*

in the Old Testament used probably over 225 times. Why? Because impurity and purity is a biblical issue, because it's an issue with God. Throughout Scripture we are told to be able to distinguish between what is impure and what is pure. So it's a common theme and, therefore, it's a common word.

The Jews were very much aware of the ideas of impurity and purity, very much aware of that. The Jews of Jesus' day had developed a very, very sophisticated external religious system, as we learned last time. We won't go over all the detail of that. They have gone way beyond the law of God, they had adhered to the law of God as much as was possible in the ceremonies and the rituals and the rites that God had ordained in the Levitical law, but they had added many others, literally hundreds of other prescriptions to the things that were scriptural.

Out of that had come the notion that defilement was something outside of them. They were under the illusion that on the inside they were good and godly. You would have to say that's what all Pharisees thought. You do remember the Pharisee in Luke 18 who prays, thus with himself, "I thank you that I'm not like other men, even like that wicked tax collector. I tithe, I fast, I do all the right ceremonies and rituals." That was the illusion they lived under.

The apostle Paul had the same illusion, according to Philippians 3, where he says that according to the law, he was blameless, he was zealous, he was a Pharisee, a Hebrew of the Hebrews, kosher, kept all the traditions, all the prescriptions. And he put that in the achievement column in his former unbelieving life. That's the way they thought.

And so they thought that because they were good on the inside and everybody who followed them bought into that theology thought the same thing, and that was pervasive all over the land of Israel, they all thought that they were basically good on the inside, they were righteous on the inside, they went to the synagogue, they observed the traditions of the elders, they followed the ceremonies and the ritual washings that they were told to do, and so they therefore were good and righteous. And the only thing they had to be afraid of was something on the outside because the inside was fine. That was the illusion.

They were like modern psychologists. The only thing that was going to defile them was something outside of them that might pollute them. So they lived thinking that they were holy and pure and virtuous. In order to maintain that, they just had to make sure they never got near any corrupting influence. And that is what is behind this, this particular lesson from our Lord Jesus.

Now remember, this is a pervasive viewpoint in the land of Israel, and this is what the disciples of Jesus and even the apostles of Jesus had always been taught, that the only thing to avoid is outside of you. The system of salvation by works in a system of self-righteousness where you earn your way to God by showing up at the synagogue, by giving deference to things biblical, by making sure you followed the traditions of the elders, by going through all the symbolic ceremonies that were prescribed, you therefore had made yourself right with God, so you were okay on the inside, you just had to make sure you didn't get touched by any polluting influence from the outside. That's how they lived, that's how they thought.

Now Jesus is about to shatter that and teach a lesson on the inside story about defilement. Now, He states the truth in verses 14 and 15. The truth is stated in verses 14 and 15. "He called the crowd to

Him again.” What crowd is this? Very likely the crowd mentioned in chapter 7, verse 1, “Some of the scribes gathered around Him when they had come from Jerusalem.” They wouldn’t be the only ones there, everywhere He went, there were crowds.

In fact, on that very occasion, the end of chapter 6, He had landed on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee near Gennesaret, which is near Capernaum, and tied up the boat. When they got out, verse 54 says the people recognized Him, ran about the whole country, began to carry here and there those on their pallets who were sick to the place where He was, and this is a typical scenario.

So there’s a huge crowd there and in the front of the crowd would be the Pharisees and the scribes, always looking for a way to capture Jesus in some violation so they could get an indictment against Him to have Him killed. So the crowd has reconvened here in verse 14. He’s directing His conversation at them, whereas in verses 1 to 14 He was talking primarily to scribes and Pharisees, now the crowd is the object of His lesson.

So He calls the crowd to Him again and He began saying to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand.” I want to help all of you who have been basically under the teaching of these Pharisees and scribes. This is for every one of you to know. “Listen and understand, all of you.” This is a very comprehensive, very important, very foundational, very essential truth. This is at the heart of what you need to know. And what is it? Here comes the parable or the analogy. “There is nothing outside the man which can defile him if it goes into him, but the things which proceed out of the man are what defile the man.”

This is an analogy, and I don’t want to get too graphic here, this is a simple analogy. What goes into you is not defiling, it’s food. What comes out of you physically is defiling. You want to stay away from those unclean things that come through elimination. The parallel passage in Matthew 15 even says it comes out in the draught and the Greek word for draught means the place on which you sit. So you get the idea. This is a simple illustration but a very obvious one.

The food that you eat is not going to defile you, but you want to stay away from the results of that. That’s a very simple illustration. Anybody would understand that. So this crystallizes in their mind a kind of axiom, of course. It’s not what you take in that defiles, that you try to avoid, it’s what comes out.

So that’s the truth stated, and it’s stated in just simple terms of natural life. But there’s a point behind it, the truth stated is followed by the truth explained, and the truth explained is really important. What does He mean by this? That is the issue. What is He getting at?

Well, let’s just back up a minute and say this. Where He’s going with this is that spiritually speaking, pollution is not outside of you, it doesn’t come into you, it comes out of you because the problem is not outside of you, the problem is inside of you. That’s the point. Should they have known that? Of course they should have known that. First Samuel 16:7, “Man looks on the outward appearance, God looks on” - what? - “on the heart.” The heart is evil, that’s the issue, and it comes out of the man. That’s what is defiling. That’s what is corrupt.

Matthew even says it comes out of the mouth. And the reason Matthew refers to the mouth is because the mouth is the most ready to express the evil of the heart. More evil is spoken than is

done. It's so much easier to do that, that's why Isaiah said he was a man of unclean lips because that's how he identified the wretchedness of his heart. The whole principle is that evil doesn't come into you from the outside, it comes out of you from the inside. And this is shocking, believe me, to the Pharisees and the scribes. They don't like this. That's not what they think.

They are concerned about all matters of external defilement. They live by those issues, and their hearts were full of all kinds of evil. Even here they are plotting the murder of Jesus. Now, why do they feel so strongly about these external things? Where did that come from?

Well, you know the answer to that. If they go back to the Mosaic law, to the books of the Pentateuch as we know them, they would come across the book of Leviticus, and in Leviticus there are all kinds of ceremonial prescriptions that are laid upon the people of God. Leviticus is full of lists, lists about things that defile. You're not to touch them. You're not to drink this. You're not to eat that. They are there in the book of Leviticus.

They were not to touch a dead body or they would be defiled, ceremonially, ritually. They were not to come in contact with any bodily fluids, people who had - women who had a baby would be considered to be defiled until they went through a purification ceremony after childbirth. People with leprosy were considered to be defiled. People who contacted reptiles would be defiled, and anybody who touched a person who had touched a reptile would be passing on the defilement. Anybody who touched a gentile would be defiled. Anybody who had touched a person who had touched a gentile would receive the defilement.

There were some very strict Levitical principles of external defilement that are laid out unquestionably in the Scripture. So that's where it started. But it never was to be that and that alone and never a consideration of the heart, but rather those were to be symbolic of the heart issues.

For example, circumcision. Every male was to be purified by circumcision. There was a reason for that. Throughout human history, Jewish women had the lowest percentage of cervical cancer because of circumcision and diseases like that. There are records concerning that. So it was actually a healthy thing to do for Jewish women in the preservation of the race.

But more than that, circumcision was a symbol of the need for a heart cleansing and the fact that man was sinful at the very, very basic element of his being, and out of man would just come more sinners and more sinners and more sinners as he passed on his fallenness. So he needed cleansing. Circumcision demonstrates that at a very foundational level of life.

The symbolic kinds of cleansings that were prescribed were like pictures in a picture book before a child reads words. They were like symbols and images and visions and shadows of the spiritual reality.

Well, the Jews landed on those things and never got to the heart and so they just added to those things. They came up with further prescriptions of ritual, ceremonial defilement. And they had an elaborate, elaborate system of external cleansings, all kinds of things. I told you about that last time, right? Volumes written on how to wash your hands, how to rinse your hands.

In fact, it was so complicated and so impossible that they eventually came up with what are called

laws of intention. Laws of intention. So instead of trying to keep all of these things, you just got up every morning and said, "I intend to be undefiled today." And if you said that, that - you could waive all the ceremonies for the day. It was all about externals. It was all about the outside.

And at this point, you know, you're saying to yourself, if God didn't want them to get preoccupied with this, why did He institute these in the first place? Because they needed symbols, they needed pictures, they needed types, they needed representations of a spiritual reality. Ceremonies, various kinds of rituals, various kinds of prescriptions with touching and eating and drinking simply were external representations of the fact that God wanted heart cleansing. He wanted the heart to be pure from pollution, corruption, and defilement. So the writer of Hebrews says in Hebrews 8:5 these things are an example and shadow of heavenly things. They are figures for the time then present.

In chapter 9, verse 10, the writer of Hebrews says foods and drinks and various washings and fleshly ordinances were imposed until the time of reformation. That would be the time of Christ. They had a temporary role to play. They were like the ABC's, like the primer, like the basics that you teach a child by using illustrations. In Hebrews 10:22 it says, "Let us draw near with a true heart, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience."

You come to the New Testament, and all of that disappears. All of that goes away because all along the heart was always the issue. That's why Hebrews 6:1 and 2 says, "Leaving behind the washings, let us go on to maturity." Abandon all of that. The Holy Spirit is telling the Hebrew believers and all of us to abandon the shadows, the types, the pictures, the sacrifices of the Old Covenant and come to Christ, the substance. Let the shadow go, the substance is here. Let the figures go, the reality is here.

But the Jews were scrupulous with the symbols and ignored the inward realities. That's why Jesus said to the leaders, "You are outside painted white, inside you're full of dead men's bones." You stink, you're corrupt, and you have the decay of death.

And take circumcision, for example. It is abrogated in the New Testament. Galatians simply says that if you put your trust in circumcision, Christ is made of no effect because you're hoping in a ceremony and a work and Christ, and you must hope for salvation in Christ alone. If circumcision means anything to you as far as your salvation is concerned, you've made Christ of no effect.

Paul says circumcision, non-circumcision - meaningless - meaningless. And here, the end of verse 19, in the words that Jesus said, He declared all foods clean. In one simple statement, He obliterated all the dietary laws of Judaism. And along with all the dietary laws of Judaism came all the defilements that were connected with those dietary laws, it was all gone. It was all wiped out in one statement.

Paul saw that in Colossians chapter 2 and verse 20. "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles," those ABC's, those pictures, "why are you living as in the world? Do you submit yourself to those laws, such as do not handle, do not taste, do not touch?" There's no point. If you've come to Christ, you let that go. You let that all go, it's all gone.

You remember Acts chapter 10? You remember Peter has a vision? He sees a sheet with all kinds of unclean and clean animals, and the Lord says to him, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." And Peter says, "I've

never eaten anything that's unclean." And the Lord responds to him by saying in Acts 10, "Do not call unclean what God has cleansed." All those dietary laws are gone.

Every once in a while, a book appears in the Christian bookstore advocating that we all go back to an Old Testament diet to experience the blessing of God. No, no, no, no - that's all set apart. It says it right there in verse 19, "He declared all foods clean." First Timothy 4, Paul writes about false teachers who forbid you to eat certain things, right? And then Paul says, "All things are to be received with thanksgiving. Nothing is unclean."

That whole system has been obliterated. It's gone. That's why in the New Testament there are no rituals, there are no ceremonies, none. There are no rites. And whenever you see a religion that is basically full of all kinds of external ceremonies and rituals and rites, it is Phariseeism all over again - all over again.

Am I surprised that the Roman Catholic Church cannot get to the end of sexual abusive priests? No. Why? Because the whole religion is external. They're all external. They're just like the Pharisees. On the outside, they're painted white, they do all the ceremonies, they go through all the rituals, and the routine. Inside, they're full of dead men's bones. Inside, they're corrupt. Inside, they're wicked. Inside, they're impure. They can't contain that. You can't stop that. To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled, everything is defiled.

Everything they touch is defiled because they are defiled. Not surprised, not at all. It just goes with being undefiled. And that's what all that external religion is, it's all the outside and nothing to do with the inside. And that was the Pharisees. How tragically, really, that they were caught up in the pictures, the child pictures, never did get to the reality of the heart. Proverbs 4 says, "Guard your heart for out of it are the issues of life." Out of it are the issues of life. Problem is the heart.

So Jesus protests against external religious system, external ceremony, external ritual, external washings like Mormon baptisms in the temple and things like that. There are a lot of examples of that. He's after inward purity.

Now, this is a monumental moment. I mean this crystallizes the difference, doesn't it? They're into external religion. The assumption, they're good and their environment is bad and they've got to make sure they mitigate the impact of a polluting environment. Jesus flips that around and says, "The problem is not what's outside you, the problem is what is inside you. You are vile and you corrupt the environment around you."

All the Old Testament pictures of cleansing were finally resolved in Christ. Christ came to bring the cleansing that everyone so needed. And once He came, all the pictures should have disappeared. He came to fulfill the whole law, Matthew 5:17.

In the New Testament you have no rituals - none. The Lord's table and Baptism, those aren't rituals, we know what they symbolize. We have no washings. We have no ceremonies. We have no rites. We have no sacrifices. The New Testament speaks only of what defiles the inside. Matthew 15 speaks of the heart being defiled. In Titus 1, it speaks of the defiling influence of unbelief. First Corinthians 8, the defiling influence of idolatry, putting anything in the place of God. Hebrews 12, the defiling influence of bitterness in the heart. Jude 23 talks about the defiling influence of sin that is in

us. All the externals are gone. So the truth is stated here by our Lord in a simple illustration, a simple little parable.

Now, verse 17 brings in the disciples. "When He had left the crowd and entered the house, His disciples questioned Him about the parable." Questioned Him about the parable. You know, I think they - they probably understood what He was trying to say but it was so contrary to what they had always been taught. Your whole life, what you're trying to do is avoid bumping into somebody who is defiled, avoid eating something that's defiled because you haven't gone through a ceremonial washing or rinsing, a very complicated kind of thing.

Their whole life, the assumption was you're good on the inside. If you can just keep yourself from bumping into something on the outside that's bad, you're going to be fine. This is all new. This is all new, and so they ask Him about the parable. Now, you have to understand what they say totally, and Mark doesn't give it all to us, so turn to Matthew 15. Matthew 15. Fear not, we're going to finish.

Matthew 15, verse 12, "The disciples came and said to Him, 'Do You know'" - so when they came and wanted an explanation, they also said this, this is the full picture. "They said to Him, 'Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard the statement?'" What does that tell you? That tells you they got it, right? They understood it. You are so concerned about washing on the outside - you remember the incident just before? They were condemning Jesus and His disciples for eating without ceremonially going through the hand-rinsing rite. Weren't talking about dirt, they were talking about ceremony.

So when Jesus said, "You don't need to be afraid of what's outside of you, you need to be afraid of what's inside of you because that is what corrupts you," they got it and they were offended when they heard the statement. "And so He answered and said to them" - that is, to the disciples - "Every plant which my heavenly Father didn't plant will be uprooted."

Wow. You know what that says about them? They're not wheat. If we can borrow the language of Matthew 13:28 to 30, there is wheat and there are tares, right? Who sows the tares? The devil sows the tares. So you have people in the Kingdom of God that look like wheat and they're actually tares and they're sown by Satan, and that would be the Pharisees and the scribes. That would be any false religionists in our time or any time.

Jesus said, "That's a plant my heavenly Father didn't plant, and they're all going to be uprooted." And it describes it in Matthew 13, the angels are going to come, right? And they're going to bring in the harvest, and they're going to barn the wheat and they're going to burn the tares. So He says, "Look, they're going to be judged, they're going to be condemned."

And then in verse 14 He says, "Let them alone." Boy, you never want to hear that, do you? You're past the point of grace, you're past the point of invitation, you're past the point of hope, you're past the point of salvation, let them alone. That's what the Old Testament said. Ephraim, or Israel, is joined to idols, let them alone. "My Spirit will not always strive with men." God has an end to His patience. Let them alone. They're headed for judgment. They're blind guides of the blind. They are blind, all the people they lead are blind, and if a man is blind, guiding blind man, both will fall into a pit.



They're all headed for disaster, and all the people they influence are headed for disaster, and that disaster is an eternal hell. Hmm. Of course they're offended because they have a completely different approach to religion. They think they're good on the inside and they have to avoid bad influence on the outside. The truth is they're bad on the inside, and they poison the environment wherever they are. The Pharisees were offended. Jesus says, "But they're under judgment, let them alone." Everybody who follows them along with them will end up in hell.

The next verse says, in verse 15, "Peter said, 'Explain the parable to us.'" Now go back to Mark. Explain the parable. Get specific. What is this thing really saying? Verse 18, "He said to them, 'Are you so lacking in understanding also?'" Well, they were because they were part of the blind being led by the blind guides.

By the way, I picked up a magazine this week - this week, current magazine, came out this week, a few days ago. In it is a quote from Gutman Locks, L-O-C-K-S, 72-year-old orthodox Jewish Hasidic teacher. Listen to what he said. This is a current Hasidic orthodox Jewish teacher. Quote, "Accepting Jesus as Messiah would mean the destruction of the Jewish people for Jesus was opposed to Jewish teaching."

You know, I respect that man. He understood. Jesus was opposed to Jewish teaching. He says if we were to accept Jesus as Messiah, it would mean the destruction of the Jewish people for Jesus was opposed to Jewish teaching. Then he gave the illustration, next line. "He did things like picking food from the fields on the Sabbath," end quote. What? Are they still stuck on that? Two thousand years later, it is still about external things, nothing has changed. That's their religion. That's their religion.

So our Lord clearly states the truth, then acknowledges that the truth is not understood and violated and then elucidates the truth starting in verse 18. "Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside can't defile him?" Now let's make the spiritual application of that obvious physical principle. It just - let's talk some more about the physical. It doesn't go into the heart, but into the stomach. So you understand, you get the analogy here about eating something, it doesn't defile, it doesn't go into the heart, it goes into the stomach, it's eliminated.

And He said, "Now let's talk about the spiritual." Verse 20, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man." Very graphic illustration. Comes in, in a sense, undefiled, goes out defiled. This is a mashal, this is an analogy. And I think the disciples were sincere. I mean they were confused because this is what they grew up in. It's what comes out.

Verse 21 then gets very specific. The spiritual lesson is now made crystal clear. "For from within out of the heart of men." That is a biblical anthropology, the source of evil is in us. Out of the man. Matthew says, "Out of the mouth," the mouth symbolizes in the analogy the exit out of which the evil comes from the heart. But the real cesspool is the heart, not the physical pump but the inner self, the mind, the source of thought, attitude, motive, desire, source of all we do and say, pumps out impurity, filth.

What comes out? "Evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness." Out of the heart, ek tēs kardias, out of the heart, ekporeuomai, comes forth, gushes, compound word. Gushes out of the heart. The description of what is in the heart of people, including the leaders of false religion.

And by the way, Mark includes twelve items in his list. Matthew has a lesser list, but Mark includes twelve. The first six are plural; therefore, they have to refer to acts. The second six are singular; therefore, they refer to attitudes behind the acts. And the Pharisees and the scribes and the rabbis loved to give lists of things to be avoided. They had all their external lists. Jesus here gives them an internal list.

First, evil thoughts, *hoi dialogismoi*, *hoi kakos dialogismoi*, we'll get dialogue from it, but a word that means intentions, attitudes, thoughts, perceptions, ideas, designs, devisings, musings, process of what goes on in the mind is bad. *Kakos* is a strong word, bad thoughts. This is James 1, lust conceiving in the heart.

Fornications comes out first on the list, as we would expect, because of the power of sexual temptation and sexual sin. Whatever else of sin may reign in the world, this seems to reign as king of corruption. That is why if you just take the Internet as a reflection of the human heart, there are millions more pornographic sites than one could even imagine on the Internet and far more people interested in that particular perversion than all other perversions combined.

It's the word - fornications is the Greek word *porneia*, from which comes pornography, all kinds of extramarital unnatural sexual sin. And then, obviously, thefts, murders, adulteries which would be included in the word fornications, but uniquely refers *moicheia*, to sex of any kind that violates a marriage vow and covenant.

Coveting, which literally - that one in verse 22, deeds of coveting, means greediness. Then wickedness, *ponēria* in plural, all kinds of malicious evil, all comes out of the heart. Backing that up in singular are the attitudes, deceit, sensuality - that's *aselgeia*. Deceit means lying, not telling the truth, deceptiveness, false witness. *Aselgeia* for sensuality means lewdness, lasciviousness in behavior and speech. It's a dirty mind that shows up in conversation as well as in behavior.

Envy, literally *ophthalmos ponēros*, an evil eye. *Ophthalmos* from which we get ophthalmology. Latin means *invideo*, that is to look with hate, to look with anger, an evil eye, which translates in to being envious. Slander which is the word *blasphēmia*, that's abusive speech, abusive toward others. Pride meaning you feel superior. And finally, foolishness, *aphrosunē*, senselessness. *Phroneō* means to think, *aphroneō* means to be unthinking, senseless.

So their hands were washed and their hearts were filthy, as are all human hearts, right? All of them. This is the problem. Verse 23. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man. It's not what goes into the man that defiles him. The same as in the physical analogy, it's what comes out of him that's so defiled. All that defilement comes from inside, and no ritual, no rite, no ceremony, no sacrament, no attempt at morality, no attempt at religion can alter that defilement at all.

Well, you say, "What do we do about it? What do we do about it?" I'll tell you what you do about it. You need a new heart. You need a new heart. That is the promise of God in Ezekiel 36 in that glorious, wonderful passage regarding the New Covenant. Listen to verse 25, "I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new Spirit within you. I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and you'll be careful to observe my ordinances."

That's the promise of salvation. I have to change you on the inside. That's why Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You need to be born again." You need to be born of the water and the Spirit, the water meaning the cleansing, the washing that is described in Ezekiel 36. And you need a new life, meaning a new heart. This is a change at the very core. You have to be begotten again.

In the beautiful language of the apostle Paul in Titus 3, he says, "He saved us," verse 5, "not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness. Not on the basis of any external behaviors, moral or ceremonial, but according to His mercy by the washing of regeneration."

You know what regeneration means? It means that something dies and something new is born. It's the washing of a total transformation, a new heart, a new mind, a new soul. And by renewing of the Holy Spirit we get washed, we get a new heart, and the Holy Spirit takes over residence in us. That's the transformation. Doesn't matter what the outside is. Doesn't matter what world you live in.

People say, "Oh, boy, it's going to be pretty hard to live in this world." It probably was pretty hard for Paul to live in the world he lived in, don't you think? Always been pretty hard to live in an ungodly world because no matter what's going on on the outside, it's never the outside that's the issue. No matter what culture you live in, it's always full of people who are defiled on the inside. And if you get close to the people who are defiled on the inside - and how can you avoid that? - you're liable to be polluted by them.

That's why the Bible says evil company corrupts good morals. You're colliding with these corrupt people. You know, you're - I know you're concerned about the future. You say, "What about my kids and the way the world is going? It's going to get worse and worse and worse." And it is, and the worse and worse that it's going to get may be just a recycling of the kind of world that used to be. But what is the answer? The answer is that your kids, as well as you, are not to fear the pollution that's outside of you, you're to fear the pollution that is inside of you.

And if you have a new heart and if you've been washed and if you've been given the Holy Spirit, then all is well between you and God. And that's an eternal transaction, is it not? That's an eternal miracle. That's a new beginning that has no end. This is what the gospel offers when you put your faith in Christ. This is why the Lord said, "I have to fully reject your religion because it's a religion that makes a wrong diagnosis and therefore, it can't offer the correct cure."

If you're good and all you need to do is control your environment, then you've missed it altogether because you are bad on the inside. You don't need a different environment, you don't need to create a different environment. The Jews thought, "We'll just live in Israel, keep the gentiles out, get rid of the gentiles." That's why they hated the Romans so much. "We'll just keep all the bad people out, we'll keep all the polluting influences out. We'll have enough ritual ceremonies to keep ourselves clean."

The fact of the matter was their pollution was all on the inside. They missed it completely. You need a new heart. You need to be washed on the inside, and that's what the Spirit of God does when you put your faith in Jesus Christ. That's the gospel. And you make no contribution to that other than under the prompting of the Holy Spirit to repent of your sin and embrace Christ.

Father, thank you for our time this morning, looking at this wonderful rich portion of Scripture. So much can be said about this, so definitive is it. But we understand. I think the disciples probably understood, too, when Jesus finished explaining it. Thank you for that clear understanding that is given to us in Scripture.

Help us to know that the problem is in us, and it can only be remedied by a new heart, a new spirit, internal washing, the washing of the water of the Word - Word meaning the Word of God, meaning the gospel. Only the gospel can wash us on the inside.

Oh, Father, how we pray that there would be some even this day who would be washed, who would recognize where the true corruption lies and open their hearts to that cleansing which comes to those who put their trust in Christ. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

END

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