

Living Without a Clean Heart (Galatians 5)

by Ernest O'Neill

The sermon emphasizes the importance of having a clean heart, which is only possible through the new covenant and the immersion of the Holy Spirit.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Ezekiel 36:26, Matthew 15:18, John 14:23, Acts 9:17, Acts 15:9, James 4:17, 1 John 1:8, 1 John 3:9

Topics: "Heart Purity", "Repentance"

Description

Ernest O'Neill preaches about the importance of having a clean heart before God, emphasizing that all sins, whether in thoughts, emotions, or words, stem from the heart. He explains that stealing someone's reputation, resentment, and other sins all originate from the heart, as Jesus taught. O'Neill highlights the need for continual repentance, refusing to accept sin as normal, and seeking the Holy Spirit to cleanse and dwell within, leading to a life of victory over sin and alignment with God's will.

Transcript

Let me give you an example of how what you say shows the real state of your heart. Lets say you have a friend named Stephanie who you think exaggerates and you say to someone, "Stephanie is alright, but she exaggerates a little." Now it is so easy to say that, and you may think that there is nothing really wrong with saying that, but you really are stealing her reputation, aren't you? Because actually the person that you are speaking to doesn't know quite what you mean by, but she does exaggerate a little and you may mean she exaggerates that little and they may think she exaggerates that little, and actually its stealing Stephanie's reputation. It is stealing because the other person from that moment on, is looking out for Stephanie's exaggeration and actually he doesn't really listen to Stephanie. If you are honest, doesn't, your friend ever after that remember your comments about Stephanie?

This is stealing. 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, you find that the resentment is growing almost to hatred. When you do those things loved ones, all of those things, all of those sins, even though they may have occurred 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, He said "Its out of the heart of man that come the things that defile them, anger, hatred, fornication, murder, adultery, slander, and false witness." These are the things that come from the heart of a man and these are the things that defile them.

Now you may say no, no those are just chance events in my life that are provoked by the circumstances that I live in. They really don't 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 don't take these seriously at all, we just brush them off, we think, we don't really mean those things, actually we think we are very, very nice inside. Jesus says "No, no, a good tree bears good fruit, and a bad tree bears bad fruit. A spring doesn't produce sweet water and sour water at the same time". Know 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, what is the heart? The heart is obviously not the physical blood pumped 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 about 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 are 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 life pushes us in the different situations and we are squeezed and what is really in our hearts comes out, and shows itself and our responses, and our reactions that we did not have time to prepare before hand.

Now the truth is of course, an out and out crook says, yeah, that's right, that's what my heart is like. I killed the guy because I hate him, I wanted to get rid of him, or I steal because it is the only way to get money, nobody else will take care of me, and that's the only way to survive in this place. So an out and out a crook, won't argue with that at all. He will say that's right, what I do on the outside is what is in my heart. It's very interesting, but a respectable church member who has not necessary dealt with Jesus will probably say the same kind of thing. He will say well yeah, I may not be perfect but I live in a doggy dog world, and the only way to survive is to standup 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 are 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 born of God. So an unclean heart is not the trouble to anybody, but the person who has started to be aware that God is real, and has started to try to obey, and I think many of us are in that situation.

We have to find 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 find that it has developed within us, something that is unclean inside, something that actually does not want God, and we have 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 are 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 try to pray day by day, many of us have found that there is still within us, an unclean heart. There is something within us that has started to make our life with God a kind of uphill struggle, at contrast 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 seemed 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 is something inside like a kind of weight inside, a kind of drag on us, and we begin 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 to be 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, that has some kind of a bug in the memory system, and we are 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 is 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. It says it your storage of your feelings inside store different ones from the ones you are used to experience, or you are 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 the story sends up on the screen of your imagination, all kinds of lustful thoughts and actions that can't possibly coexist with the Spirit of Jesus. So, loved ones, that the key to the up and down life, that last sentence, that's why many of us, who are Christians have a up and down, spirit and flesh, in and out Christian life, because Jesus' Spirit cannot coexist with evil. His spirit cannot coexist 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 have sensed at times Jesus' motivations 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 are 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, which is driven out and brought in, driven out and brought in. No, you are 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 be made clean. So there is inconstant Christian life that's 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 is the way Andrew Murray puts the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant. Many of you may be 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, now just read the 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 and without, and within. In the New Testament we have the Holy Spirit entering them and dwelling within them, see not working upon them from above, as he did on Prophets, 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, and in the latter we have the Spirit of the Father of Jesus Christ.

Now the fact is, those of us with unclean hearts are some where between the Old Testament and New Testament, 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 this, what we said about Ezekiel chapter 36, remember God gave the promise of the new covenant and He said, "I will put an new Spirit within you, that's I will regenerate your spirit, I will 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 Spirits' action upon your spirit, but you do not have a constant indwelling of the Holy Spirit within. He is not in fact that 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 them, and until you have been prepared to make your heart absolutely what He wants it to be.

Now you may say to me, now don't you 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 is that kind of anomaly in a way it is that took place in the Cornelius's House, Acts 10:44. Cornelius was a Centurion you remember who certainly was 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, "While Peter was still saying this," that's why 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 Gentiles, for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God," and still it all happened at one step. I mean it is 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 Acts 9:17, it didn't happen that way, with Saul. Saul you remember met Jesus first in the Damascus road, and then three days later, this happened in Acts 9:17. "And Ananias departed and entered the house, and laying his hands on him, he said brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you onto 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 are in a position where you believe you are child of God, and you are born of God, and you are 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 and Cornelius's household, you remember Peter said and "God made no distinction between them and us, but cleansed their heart by faith."

So some people experienced it all at once, but many of us, and I suspect many here this morning have not experienced a 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 then entertain it, and relish it, and nourish it? Well if it does, your heart isn't clean, it is that simple.

You are walking with a heaviness inside you, that you don't need to walk with, and that you can't walk victoriously with. Do you find that your heart automatically sends Jesus sentiments up to your will, so that 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 its

constantly trying to repress them, and at times fails to repress them, and they burst out into a outward sin, and stain your conscience. Well if that's the situation loved ones, you are living a 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 will know what I mean, it is the one preached by John the Baptist, in Mark 1:4, and I think this will surprise you loved ones, because this is the old covenant. Now don't forget this was John the Baptist as a Jewish preacher preaching, "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preached the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins". That was it, that was the old covenant, preaching our 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 was 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 baptize means, its immerse, not the water, we are not arguing up at immersing 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 our 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 is guilt, you can have your sins forgiven, and 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 for so many of us is we don't realize that it is 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 alright, I receive 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 our unclean heart, by amateur psychology and group rationalization, that's it. Now, 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 is just human. Gossip is okay, let's face it, you can't over it. All unclean thoughts is only human, you can't over those things, a little slander, a little jealousy, you can't help it, those are normal human feelings, and you will always have them, its not the way we are? 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.

Now 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 its 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, a sin, that's the first thing. Call sin, a sin, you can't afford not to do it, because there is a cure for sin and a remedy for it. You only have to pretend if there is no remedy. You will never be cured from sin as long you cover it up or hide from it. You must call sin, a sin, that's the first thing. Be real about the things in your life that are sin. Now if there was no remedy for sin, then the whole gospel is just a big joke and is totally worthless.

The second thing you must do, is see that sin cannot be justified. You can never justify sin. You must always call sin, sin. You must stop looking at things that you do wrong, or feelings that you have that are wrong and then excuse them as shortcomings, or as little weakness in your humanity, or as little characteristics that occur because of your background, stop that. Stop saying Oh! Well I am real sweet person you know, I maybe just a bit incommunicative, not unloving, just incommunicative, stop saying that. Stop saying I just have a tendency toward a fiery kind of temperament you know, I maybe a little a fiery at times, but I am not really angry. You might say, well no one is perfect you know and basically I am a good person deep down, sure I may mess up a little here and there, but I am no criminal. Stop that and call your sin, as sin, say "I am angry, that's sin". Say "I have unlovingness, and that's sin."

Never think that anger is okay, or you can't really help it. Never think of any gossip, slander, jealousy or any other sin as just human. Never accept any sin as normal human feelings. Don't ever think that you can't help sin, or that sin is just normal part of being human, and you will always have sin until the day you die. Do not excuse anger, gossip, or sarcasm or jealousy, because when you do, you gradually reduce the whole life in Christ and it becomes less and less to you.

Some of us you know would take 1st John 1:8 that says "if we say we have no sin, we lie and the truth is not in us," now 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, but still sin, but conscious sin is what God is concerned about, that's what you have control of, and 1st John 3:9 "Whosoever is born of God does not commit sin, you don't commit sin if you are born of God."

Loved ones hold to that, hold to that. Never justify sin! Don't call it by any other name, always keep calling it sin. This is important 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. If you are living in known sin and your attitude is well, I know I need a miracle for God to set me free from this sin, so I will wait for the miracle. NO, NO, that is not 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.

If you are unwilling to call sin, sin then you can become Impenitent. Impenitence, that is lack of penitence, impenitence, un-repentance, impenitence is more than just repeated sinning. You may think that because you are sinning all the time, that there is no hope for you. This is NOT true. Impenitence is the growing tolerance of that sinning as a necessity. Its not just that you are sinning repeatedly, but impenitence is the time when your conscience becomes seared, and when you get to the point where you can no longer come to the place of full consecration. Impenitence happens when you regard your sinning as a necessity

in your life, and you begin to tolerate it. Impenitence is the acceptance of the idea that you can't stop sinning, You are in great danger when you regard your sin as normal rather than abnormal, or as natural rather than alien.

However often you may sin, you must set your heart against it, with all your being, and regard it as something that you must get rid of completely. God is more than willing to forgive you but He will also lead you to ask the all important question, which is the key to deliverance, why can't I stop sinning? There is no point, you know by crying out and saying, there is no hope for me, because I have sinned. It isn't just the sinning, its not just the falling, that's the real problem but it's the refusal to get up and go every time you fall and to believe that there comes the time when you do not need to fall. That is what true repentance is. The reason why many of you are sinning is because you have unclean heart. With an unclean heart, repentance is not, never sinning at this point in your life, but it is a refusal to accept sinning as normal in your life. It is a refusal to accept the word of God for freedom from sin. 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 the desperate crying out to God. It isn't the crying out to man, why, why can I not stop sinning? While you are crying out to man, while maybe having little achievements and accomplishments, while you are reading the books, while you are talking to other people, saying why can't I stop sinning, even though I am a Christian? While you are doing that, you are just pretending. While you are trying to justify your situation, you are not even serious, but when you are desperate enough to cry out to the Holy Spirit, "Holy Spirit, why can I not stop this, why?" Then you are 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. He will explain it to you all this, 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 the 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.

Let me read this to you, John 14:22-24, "Judas said unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that you will show Yourself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our home in his heart." Yes, 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.

I want to try to help those of you, who wonder 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, and it is not simply an action, it is an attitude. It is attitude of the declared relentless and paganism to sin, that's it, that's what repentance is. It is a declared relentless and paganism, and hostility to sin that will not accept sin as normal. You must never accept sin!! I do not want to blaspheme but be like the guy in the movie, and say "I am mad as hell and I am not going to take it anymore." Do not put up with any sin at all. "say something like this, "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."

With a clean heart, it's a totally different life. Instead of poison coming up from inside that you have to hold on with all your power, beauty, and purity, and love from Jesus' own heart comes up from inside you. You can see why I said, it's your own fault then if you sin, it is, because the will is now receiving thoughts that are loving, and kind, and pure, and naturally spontaneously Christ like. That's why it's such an effortless life when Jesus cleanses you through the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Now loved ones will you walk on? Next time I will 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, the results are now 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 your Holy Spirit can dwell constantly, and uninterruptedly within us. So we ask your 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 that all to you, and give up the right effort to resist you again. We ask this in the name of our Savior Jesus, and 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 ever more Amen!

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