

The Religious Game of Clean vs Unclean

1 Thessalonians 4: 7

Why does it seem that so many people are obsessed with beautification these days? And how much was spent on cosmetics and cosmetic surgery? In 2010, during the economic downturn, 10 billion dollars was spent on cosmetics. In 2003, 10 billion dollars was spent on cosmetic surgery in the USA. And in 2008, over 40 billion dollars was spent on dieting products. But remember the old adage: Beauty is only skin deep.

And unfortunately women are heavily targeted and blitzed by the advertising industry; that if they don't follow along, it will be to their detriment. What does the Bible say about that? 1 Peter 3: 1 to 7- Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear. Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel-- rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

Now I know that it said this for the married women; but wise, single ladies should follow it as well. And needless to say; don't be part of the crowd that judges people by the clothes they wear. Because that's nothing but legalism and snobbery manifesting. Attending worship services should not be like going to a Paris fashion show. We need to be able to relate with others as Our Lord did; with compassion.

Mark 5: 25 to 34 - Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well." Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. And Jesus, immediately knowing in

Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?" But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'" And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction." By Old Covenant standards, she was unclean, & should have stayed home. Everyone that she had contact with, became ceremonially unclean, and couldn't participate in temple rituals. That's why the Pharisees bathed themselves and changed their garments every time they got back from being in touch with the ordinary people. They even stretched the Mosaic Law when eating, so Our Lord Jesus Christ had to correct them.

Mark 7: 1 to 23 - Then came together unto him the Pharisees, and certain of the scribes, which came from Jerusalem. And when they saw some of his disciples eat bread with defiled, that is to say, with unwashen, hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing of cups, and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables. Then the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashen hands? He answered and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: But ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free . And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; Making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye. And when he had called all the people unto him , he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you , and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning

the parable. And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Now there are many examples of uncleanness in the Old Covenant, and we won't be able to look at them all now; so I would encourage you to study them yourselves. But most of them are in the Book of Leviticus. They generally fit into three categories; ceremonial, moral, and diet.

It was the responsibility of the priests to teach the people; by example and by word. Ezekiel 44: 23 - And they shall teach My people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

How well did they do? Ezekiel 22: 26 - Her priests have violated My law and profaned My holy things; they have not distinguished between the holy and unholy, nor have they made known the difference between the unclean and the clean; and they have hidden their eyes from My Sabbaths, so that I am profaned among them.

Now we are under the New covenant, and there is a big difference. Thanks to the Shed Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ, old things have passed away.

2 Corinthians 5: 17 - Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

And as we are now in Christ Jesus; He is the centre of our being. And to get the proper interpretation of the Old Testament; we need to look at it through the eyes of Our Lord Jesus. The religious system had gotten so far away from God, that Our Lord took action. Matthew 23 is a list of their faults and failures, and what Our Lord thought of them.

Matthew 23: 16 to 22 - Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple sweareth by it & by him that dwelleth therein. & he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

As their hearts were not right before God, their worship was not acceptable; and their worship descended into mere ritualism, an ungodly substitution. Matthew 15: 7to 9 - "Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: `These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

How did Our Lord Jesus minister to the people?

Mark 1: 40 to 45 - And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean. And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed. And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away; And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them. But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that Jesus could no more openly enter into the city, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter.

Cleanliness was perceived in the Old Testament to be measured by three categories; ceremonial, moral, and diet. And when you read the all-inclusive list; how could anyone be clean? That's why the priests stayed in the temple when they were on their two week course of duty, and when they came on duty, they had to wash their hands and feet. When Moses gave the Hebrews God's Ten Commandments, as in Exodus 20; it was evident that no-one could fulfill them. These failures were sins, and had to be atoned with various offerings; including blood sacrifices, and meal offerings. And they only covered for the actual sin, and not the original sin. But thankfully, now that Our Lord Jesus has with His Shed Blood, made an atonement for our sins; we no longer need to make those sacrifices.

Hebrews 9: 8 to 14 - the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience-- concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a

heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Even the sign of circumcision was no longer required. Acts 15: 1 to 21 - And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said , Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses

of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day.

The moral law is described in Leviticus 18 and 20.

God instituted the family, and through the marriage of one man and one woman, blessed their union with children.

Psalms 127: 1 to 5 - A Song of degrees for Solomon. Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep. Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

The relationships that were forbidden under the Old Covenant, are still forbidden. These include fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, and bestiality. Back then, the penalty was death by stoning. Now, when convicted by the Holy Spirit, we confess, renounce and repent of the sin; and that means to do it no more.

1 John 1: 8 to 10 - If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John 1: 7 - But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Diet was another major area that God's people had to be aware of. Certain foods were clean and others were not. Leviticus 11 has a whole list of unclean animals, birds, and fish. How does that affect us to-day? Can we have a ham sandwich without incurring the wrath of God?

Matthew 15: 11 - Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

So if nothing that we eat makes us unclean, as Our Lord Jesus tells us; what should our attitude be to our diet?

Paul, in Romans, gives us an outline of our Christian responsibilities.

Romans 14 - Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another

esteemeth every day alike . Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it . He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

1 Timothy 4: 4 & 5 - For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Another aspect of our topic is how we relate to others.

In the times of Christ, the Jews disliked other peoples.

John 4: 9 - Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

Paul tells us what we should be doing.

Romans 10: 12 - For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.

Galatians 3: 28 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 3: 8 to 11 - But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man , which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

So there is no place for racism.

So where does that leave us now? Under the New Covenant, we have God's Holy Spirit residing inside us.

Romans 8: 13 - For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 - Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.

The question is; what is of the Lord and what is not? To help us, God has given us His Holy Spirit, and His Word. While the Bible contains the principles of life; there are many things that fall through the cracks.

What are we to do? When Our Lord formed the Body of Christ; He set up local branches, called churches. They were led by pastors; who imitate Our Lord in caring for the members. Besides interceding for them, he had another responsibility. Ezekiel 44: 23 - And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean.

And when doing this, we have to be careful not to become legalistic, and overemphasizing minor issues. It really does not matter what shoes you wear to church. The Early Church dealt with this too.

Acts 15: 19, 20 - Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.

So how do we apply this? First of all, it shouldn't have to be stated; but churches are not community centres, but Churches of the Living God; where believers come together. Matthew 4: 10 - Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'"

Therefore, Christian Churches should be bastions of moral purity. It is hard in this corrupt world; but with deliverance, curses can be broken off, and demons cast out.

2 Timothy 2: 22 - Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Another major area causing problems to-day is the occult. God hated it back then, and He hates it still to-day. The prohibitions against it are still valid. Deuteronomy 18: 9 to 14 - When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do .

1 Corinthians 10: 14 - Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry.

This is hard to do, because it is everywhere. Especially with computers, the internet, modern technology etc., you can't easily avoid it. When we had our website re-designed, I refused to allow anything ungodly on our site. But if we wanted to use YouTube etc., it is full of occult ads; so it is not an option for us.

The Early Church was also told not to eat blood.

Acts 15: 29 - that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Genesis 9: 4 - But you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is , its blood.

These are the major concerns; all others are relatively minor; but pray about them. It is getting harder and harder these days, especially for the youth, to walk unpolluted. Our Lord Jesus Christ knows what we are going through, and He encourages us. 1 Thessalonians 4: 7 - For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness.

Pastor T. John Franklin

Church of Salvation, Healing, and Deliverance

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