

Who is Righteous?

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart...” Psalms 24:33-4

The Psalmist David understood what righteousness is. His only problem was, he could not attain to righteousness. After his affair with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband, Uriah, David repented before God. In his repentance, he begged God, “*Create in me a clean heart*” Psalms 51:10. David understood the sacrifice of another animal's blood was not the answer. He said to God, “*For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering*” Psalms 51:16. In the case of David, he could not come before God with “*clean hands and a pure heart,*” so he came with what he had; a broken and contrite heart because of his sin. He said, “*a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*” Psalms 51:17.

Almost every religion concerns itself with “cleansing the hands” of sinners, that is, how to live a decent and moral life. The modern Christian community has, for example, been inundated with what I call “How-to books;” how to overcome addictions...how to be faithful to your wife, and such like. The literal “washing of hands” is an important tradition in Judaism and the eastern religions. Obviously, this tradition began for health reasons, but in time took on other meanings. Under the Law of Moses, the ceremonial “washing of hands” was a declaration of innocence. Even Pontius Pilate, after he presided over the trial of Jesus, “*...took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it*” Matthew 22:27.

Job said, “*If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me*” Job 9:30-31. Job understood that washing hands did nothing at all for him spiritually, because God required a “*clean heart.*” If he came before God with hands he had ever so diligently cleansed, yet God would cast him down to show how dirty he really was. Does this seem harsh? No, because God requires a “*pure heart,*” and while man may wash his entire body outwardly, he can never cleanse his heart. Jesus told the most religious among the people in His day, “*...ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. ...cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter; that the outside of them may be clean also*” Matthew 23:25-26.

I heard a famous evangelist recently say a righteous

man could “...tell a lie at the moment Jesus returned, and he would be received into Heaven.” The same minister had previously said a person could be in the act of adultery at the return of Christ, and he would be received “if his faith was in Christ and the cross.” The Apostle Paul warned of this twisted thinking, saying, “***Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God***” I Corinthians 6:9-10. Who then can be saved? Paul answers in the next verse; “*And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God*” I Corinthians 6:11.

Three things happen when you trust in Jesus Christ as Savior: **1.** You are **washed** (from your sin). Revelations 1:5. **2.** You are **sanctified** (made holy). **3.** You are **justified** (made righteous). These things describe the complete transformation of the one who has trusted in Christ.

The modern church promotes this as “only the way God sees you.” Nothing could be farther from the truth. Salvation not only changes the way God sees you, but how your spouse sees you, how your friends see you, and even how your enemies see you. This is due to the complete change Christ makes in you! As Jesus said, “*A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.*” Matthew 5:14.

Our preachers have espoused a gospel whose only change involves your eternal destination. You are told you are still a sinner, but now assured that Heaven will be your eternal home. If the children of God are still sinners, there can be no limits on the sin they may commit and still be received by God. If this is true, every person in America could be “saved” and on their way to Heaven, yet nothing would be changed. The prisons would still be full; violence would continue in our streets, immorality and perversion would be flaunted, but we would all be “forgiven ...without change.”

Jesus Christ did not suffer and die on the cross to only “forgive our sins.” He is “*the Christ*” of eternity, who, according to the prophet Daniel, came into the world as a man to “*make an end of sins.*” Daniel 9:24-25. He died on the cross as “the Lamb of God,” to “*take away our sin*” John 1:29, which means to take sin out of our heart and nature. Only those who “*trust in Jesus Christ*” will stand before God with “*clean hands and a pure heart.*” Those whose heart is not made pure have not trusted in Jesus Christ for who He is, and what He came to do.

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