

Mr. Camilo Reyes

Sermon Transcript

July 3, 1999

Touch Not the Unclean Thing

I decided the other evening to pick a topic that I had thought about for quite awhile. And I did a little bit of research maybe a year or so ago and I didn't put much together on it; but then I decided the more I think about this subject, based on today's society, I think it would be very applicable; not only to bring out things from this society that you obviously are aware of, but also how easy it is for us to be, as part of this society, if we are not careful, sucked into this society.

Many people in our society today, for example, have very few taboos. There are very few things that they say, "Oh, I don't do that. I don't go there. I don't get involved in that. I don't believe in this. I don't use that kind of language." Very few people in our society have taboos, if any. Too little thought, if any, is given in regards to wrong, to forbidden sinful things, to sinful things. Of course we are unique in that area in one sense, that there are certain things that every one of us would say, "I don't eat this"; or "I don't celebrate that"; or "I don't associate in that location"; or "I don't do this". I think we have more of a proclivity to have certain taboos. And yet because we live in a society that has very few if any, we have to be careful because we can easily find ourselves very much in the same attitude that the world is in, of not having too many taboos about a variety of things.

Profanity is an example. It is something that this society uses so very much. I was thinking this morning - I gave this same sermon in Bakersfield this morning - the thought came to mind when I was going through this, here I am almost 61, and when I was a teenager, when I was in my middle teens going through high school, even guys who were very macho, very few of us used a lot of profanity. Probably the vast majority of you older people, in your 50s, 60s, and 70s probably fall into that same category. And yet today you cannot in most cases turn on the radio, the television, or read something in the newspaper without some kind of profanity coming out in it. Some kind of off-center situation. Obscenities, profanity are used freely today in today's society without regard or question.

Pornography is an example. Pornography today is a multi-billion dollar industry. And of course you are very much aware, and the more you are involved with computers and PC's, I am sure that you're aware that even in Congress, and even the President and the lawmaking bodies of our government are very concerned about the easy access that your young people have in relationship to pornography on the internet. And books and tapes and all kinds of variety of things. Things on cable television. Where does it stop?

It seems like there is no place that it really stops. As I said at the beginning, very few people in today's society have very few taboos. Even to the point that the powers to be have decided to put V chips on this particular means of communication. Or they put, I believe it was just last week that the Senate, after it had passed through Congress, decided to put a different kind of chip in certain TVs, I forget what they call that chip, so that kids cannot tune in to certain television stations, certain programs, etc. I know that the same thing applies with computers, where parents can put in a special word, or a special name, and unless the other person knows that particular password, they cannot get into certain parts of the internet, which as far as I am concerned are fine. That's very good.

More than half of our people, as an example, no longer believe in marriage in the traditional sense. They just live together. And if things work out, maybe 3, 5, 7 years down the line they'll get married. If not, well hey, we never really committed ourselves one to another. So there's really nothing to tie people up. So all of these things, I think all of us recognize as parents, as adults, that they have a tremendous amount of influence on

our young people. And not only on our young people but all of us in general. They really do. They have a tremendous amount of influence on us, even though we think, no, I'm beyond that. I'm too old to consider that or to be considered in that situation. No, it still has a certain amount of influence on us, that at times we may not recognize.

As I said more than half of the people no longer believe in marriage in the traditional sense. And they just simply live together. It is even not unusual to hear of approval by some "anything goes" religions in society. Hey, if somebody believes in homosexuality, fine! Somebody believes in lesbianism. In one sense, I'm sorry I'm bringing up some of these words, but they're not only in our vocabulary, they're in our news day in and day out. And whether you and I want to or not, brethren, it has an effect on us. Not that we're involved in it, but just the idea that it is there. You know, we just read over something in the paper. We watch something on television, on the major four channels. And it's kind of like water off the duck's back. It doesn't seem to make an impact. And maybe that's how these people are trained, to not show emotion or anger or any kind of an upset situation when they do report on certain things that go on in our society.

Nevertheless, there is very little that is condemned, in essence. Because we live in an "anything goes" society. And even some religions today. And if anyone believed that way, and if anyone dared say anything negative about someone's lifestyle, one is easily criticized for one's moralistic judgment. And oh, sometimes what comes across when somebody is put in that category of a moralistic judge, oh, it's worse than the topic that's being covered in some instances. And people are sometimes put in the category, "You're just a do-gooder." Look, if they don't bother you, leave people alone. Whatever people do in the privacy of their own home, or their bedroom, whatever it may be, as long as it doesn't hurt anybody, what difference does it make, is what society says.

You know what, brethren, even if it doesn't hurt someone else, a third party, there is still some tremendous damage. And I think we realize it is being done to the individuals who are participating in it. Some ignorantly, possibly, and some obviously knowingly. Very much knowingly about it.

What is meant by the Biblical term "unclean" as we read it in God's word? That word unclean is brought up on many occasions, under many circumstances. Obviously you might think, unclean means something that is dirty, something that's filthy, something that's yukky. You can come up with all kind of different descriptions for it. Maybe even be a little graphic in describing. Well let's see, a road kill that has been there 4-5 days is unclean. Who would ever think of going and picking that up and getting it off the road? Isn't that what crows and buzzards and all those other birds that God created as flying vacuum cleaners do, to come around and keep the roads clean? So there are certain things that you and I would consider unclean. And obviously God refers to some of those things as also being unclean. But in what other way does God use that word, unclean? What is meant by the Biblical word unclean as we read in God's word?

Is God's word simply referring to one not touching a dead thing? Which is unclean. Is that all that God is referring to? What else does it mean to us?

God looks and refers to a certain conduct and lifestyle as being an unclean thing. We need to recognize the difference between right and wrong, clean and unclean. Or if we don't then we are going to be as part of the world, and in essence it has no taboos. So we do need to understand that. And we do understand it. But again, living in this society sometimes it is very difficult. So what is it that God wants us to be careful about this particular word unclean, that we need to be very much aware so we make sure we do obey the command given to us by God. For he says, Touch not the unclean thing. Do we think God is telling us, look, don't touch that dead rat. Don't touch that dead bird over there. It does refer to that in essence. But we're going to see how expanded that particular subject can be and exactly what it is that God is referring to.

What exactly is this unclean thing that God tells us not to touch, not to be a part of? We all realize that we are to come out of this society and not to be a part of its process. That same admonition was earlier given to the people of God, as we read in **Lamentations 1:17**. You'll see how it all is tied in as I go through this particular subject.

Lam.1:17. *Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.* If you read the context there in Lamentations where they were lamenting the things that were taking place, that had been done in Jerusalem, the religious upheaval that was being created, etc., God said that Jerusalem had become was an unclean

thing among the rest of the nation, the towns and the cities. Instead of it being a beautiful city to show forth the glory of God, and the fact that it was the place that the prophets went, it was a kind of showplace. God says very clearly, Jerusalem has become an unclean thing among them.

We can read many similar commands and admonitions, as an example in **Isaiah 52:11**. For the admonition is given here where it says, *Depart, depart. (With alarm). Depart, depart, go out from there.* And then the admonition continues. *Touch no unclean thing.*

What? You mean God's servants were telling people, don't touch dead rats. Don't touch dead things. Don't touch that dead cow, that dead horse, that dead camel, that unclean thing. Is that what God was referring to? Well in one sense, yes. But the emphasis was not on, touch not that dead thing, as we're going to continue to see.

Depart, depart, go out from there. Touch no unclean thing. Go out from the midst of her (referring to the city), *be clean you who bear the vessels of the Lord.* Now we're going to see with the last few words there, that particular phrase, you who bear the vessels of the Lord, is just as applicable to you and me today as it was back when it was written by Isaiah, as it was said about those people back then. Because today we also bear the vessel, we are the vessels of the Lord.

We read in places in the New Testament where this body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. God is in us through the Holy Spirit. We do bear then the vessels of the Lord. So Isaiah 52:11 applies to us and that admonition just as much as it did to the people it was written to back then.

So based on that little bit of background let's consider a few thoughts. Let's consider the fact that God describes people who have no sense of shame as being unclean. And let's see how much of that particular part is applicable to our society today. God describes people who have no sense of shame as unclean.

Notice with me **Jeremiah 6:15**. Many of the scriptures that I am going to use are scriptures that we should have in our scriptural vocabulary. They are not new scriptures or unrehearsed scriptures. They are well-known scriptures. Jeremiah 6:15. It asks, *Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? No! They were not at all ashamed, no did they know how to blush.* Does that in any way describe a little bit of our society today? People don't care. Anything goes. Anything goes. The most bizarre, the most idiotic, the most obscene of things. There's a market for it, there's a place for it, there's music, there's things you can read, things you can watch, nothing has been left untouched. How applicable is this not only to those when it was written then, but to us today? *Were they ashamed when they had committed abominations? No. They were not at all ashamed nor did they know how to blush.* In other words, blushing, being shameful doesn't even come into play here. *Therefore, it says, they will fall among those who fall. At the time I punish them they will be cast down, says the Lord.* God told them then, and the same law and the same principle follows through today. As it says, they were going to be cut down. So is society today.

God speaks of several national punishments that you and I are very familiar with in the Old Testament. In **Jeremiah 3:3** it says, *Therefore the showers have been withheld.* God has such a unique way of punishing or of getting someone's attention. Just something like, let's move the clouds over this way. And let's let the rain not fall in this area that needs it. Let's move the rain over where it is not needed, where there is already 3, 5, 7, 12, 15 feet of water. Let's pour another 3-4 inches there, 4,5,6 inches there in the next hour and a half. Like has happened. You can turn on the news and see where the water has fallen and little inserts of peoples homes going down the rivers. Or areas where farmers maybe pick up the dust and the corn or wheat or whatever just flies away. One has too much of something and another one has nothing. God has a unique way of trying to get humanity's attention.

Therefore the showers have been withheld, it says. And there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead. You refuse to be ashamed. There it is again. It is talking about a society, about a people, that refuses to be ashamed. And a person can only be ashamed when they recognize they are doing something wrong. But beyond that they can recognize they are doing something wrong, but it says here, still refuse to be ashamed. I'm going to do what I'm going to do and that's it. If you don't like it you get into your own little bailiwick and what I do over here is my business. That's just the way society thinks today. We see an expansion of more and more of this type of an attitude. It doesn't seem to be harnessed in any way.

Notice with me **Haggai 2:13-14**. And Haggai said, *If one who is unclean because a dead body touches one of those things, will it be unclean?* The Old Testament gives instruction very clearly where a person is told not to even touch a dead body, because if they touched a corpse then they were unclean. And of course you're very familiar with the fact that even in the New Testament some of those laws still applied, because Christ refers to a person being like a whitened sepulcher. That's simply a grave stone. In many instances when a person would die they would bury them right at that place. But since there was no lighting, maybe at night people would walk through there and not recognize that somebody had just been buried there, and they would hit this stone or marker where somebody had been buried. So in essence they had touched something that was dead. As a result they were unclean. And they had to go through some ritualistic washings and oblations and wait until the next day. And then they were finally clean the next day.

So the question here in Haggai is being asked with that thought in mind. *If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean*, he asks. *And then the priests said, it shall be unclean*. Yes. The answer is very clearly yes. Then Haggai answered, but see it was using something people were familiar with here in a physical sense to bring a spiritual understanding. Verse 14 brings that out somewhat. *Then Haggai answered and said, so is this people, talking about being unclean. And so is this nation before me, says the Lord. And so is every work of their hand and what they offer there is unclean*.

So it wasn't only the fact of touching something that was dead. But it was their lifestyle, it was their attitude, it was their approach to things, that God said the whole nation is unclean. The whole nation is unclean.

We read of a parallel between ancient Israel and our society today. And we can see somewhat of that association in **Isaiah 5:20**. It says, *Woe to those that call evil good and good evil, and put darkness for light and light for darkness. Who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter*.

Now you know it as well as I do, that in today's society someone can do something heinous, something absolutely terrible, and then they say, well, he was just a young kid. Or, well, he was mistreated at home. He comes from a bad background. All of these legal ramifications that are brought into play. But what is it really that goes on in one's mind? How can a child, how can a young person pick up a gun and inadvertently walk into a building and shoot 8, 10, 12, 15 people? How can they do that and not have some kind of remorse about it? How can someone like this last week, and I don't remember exactly where it was, that two boys killed their mother? They stabbed her 44 times, with three knives and a screwdriver. While one held her the other one just continued to punch these knives and the screwdriver into their mother. Because they wanted \$150 that she had in a little bank! That's the kind of society that we live in. Is it any wonder that God says about something not only being not right, but being unclean?

You know, for God to say, come out of her my people, and don't be a part of that way of doing, and don't be involved in it. Be separate, he says. And I'm not saying that any of us here go around doing that. But you see how easy, we can read the paper, "Hey, Hon, look. There's some 12-year-old kid and a 14-year-old kid that killed their mom. Forty-four times. Boy. Wonder where the sports section is here. Look! They've got this on sale; maybe we ought to go down there. We too, so easily can become insensitive to those things. We watch something on television, some terrible situation that took place, and the next thing is a commercial about underarm deodorant, or buy this for your car, or go here on this beautiful cruise ship. There's nothing wrong with that, but then it just goes on as if nothing happened.

There's a lot of copycat situations that continue to expand. I don't know how many different schools now have been affected by shootings. But it doesn't seem like it's going to let up. Just yesterday in Bakersfield, CA - you may have had it here in the LA Times, there was a fairly lengthy article on two young kids that killed somebody as a result of watching this movie, *Scream*. I remember watching a very small part of *Scream I*, it happened to be on television one night real late some weekend. And to this day when I think about it, it kind of makes the hair on the back of my head stand up. That's the kind of effect it had on me. And I remember I had sense enough to turn it or go to sleep, or whatever the case may have been. Now it is such a demanded movie that they made a sequel. *Scream II*. So these kids, from this article in our Bakersfield Californian yesterday said they committed these atrocities in their family simply because they had been influenced by *Scream II*. They kind of thought, hey, that's a cool way to kill somebody. And they did it.

That's the society that you and I live in. But on the other hand, that's the society that you and I have been told to come out of. And we do everything we can to come out of it. But we still live in it, and it is very difficult to not

really and totally cut ourselves off from it. But what should bother us is that we can easily become insensitive to these things that go on around us. Maybe we don't do them physically, but mentally.

You know, just here in your fair city of Los Angeles, wasn't it yesterday that they had to pull over a lady after some other lady cut her off. And she reached down and pulled a gun while she was driving and she pointed it at this other lady. Then the second lady picked up her cell phone and called the police. And then a big chase took place, I forgot what highway here in Los Angeles, for 3-4 hours. They finally cornered her someplace where she had to hit a couple of police cars. And I think five hours later the lady finally walked out and she said, well she made me mad because she cut me off! So I just took my gun and I pointed at her! What kind of a mind does something like that?

All of those things fall into the unclean things that God tells us, don't touch the unclean thing. And it doesn't mean that we have to sit in a car and point a gun at somebody. But again, what is our attitude. As Mr. Fish brought out in his sermonette, what goes on in the heart? What goes on in the soul? What goes on in the mind? God says we are to love him with our whole heart, our soul and our mind. Very well put, very appropriate subject, because we are in control of this or else we are in control of nothing.

We read of these parallels, of people calling something that is good bad. Well, they didn't mean to. And I hate, in one sense, to keep bringing these things up. But they are things that you probably have read. Just here the other day a little 7-8 year old boy, maybe he was 11, picked up this little three-year-old boy because he used to like to watch wrestling matches. And you know how they slam one another, throw one another, etc. He picked up his three-year-old brother, slammed him on the ground, and then expected him to get up. He died. What kind of society are we living in? Where is it going to stop? These are all real things. Columbine was the last place. What's going to be the next place? Could it possibly be in the school where you send your children? You know, where our little kids go? It could very well be.

You probably watched on television yesterday the young man who was in Columbine who was point blank shot in the head. And after the months of rehabilitation, etc., he was going to be allowed to go home now. He said he was doing all right, but then other articles brought out that he is still very slow in thinking. And he seems to speak all right, but there are still some stop gaps in this young man's voice and his speech. Not too many speech impediments were evident the other day, but they say he still has a certain amount of that. The prosthesis he had to wear for his leg, and all the terrible things that that one kid who was shot at Columbine...for one week that's all we heard. To the point that after a while we get so insensitive we say, isn't there something else on television? The same thing morning, noon, and night. You pick up the paper and more interviews, more this, more that. Again, that's more of the society we live in, and that's why God says, touch not the unclean thing. And we're going to see more of that.

Let's consider something else. Let's ask, what is uncleanness? Well obviously if you walk someplace, some restaurant, and you look and the place looks dirty, you wouldn't eat there. Because you would say, this is unclean. And I just saw the cook doing something in there through this cracked door when it opened. I don't want to eat here. Let's go someplace else. Let's go someplace where the food is good. Let's go get one of those double hamburgers that Mr. Fish was talking about. There are some taboos that some of us do have, aren't there?

But what is uncleanness? The Home Dictionary defines unclean as spiritually dirty or filthy. Whenever we see, in most instances, the word unclean, it is usually defined as spiritually dirty or filthy. It can also be referring to morally or spiritually impure. It can also be referring to infected with a harmful supernatural contingent, prohibited by spiritual law for use or contact.

When we look at those three definitions it gives us a little bit different meaning. The word for unclean in the Hebrew is *tame* or *tawmay*, meaning foul in a religious sense; spiritually defiled or polluted, and therefore unclean. Now when we read that word unclean, when God says *touch not the unclean thing*, we recognize that it's more than simply saying don't touch that dead animal, that roadkill. And of course we shouldn't touch that anyway. But he's saying more than that, having to do with society, when he says, look, these people are unclean. This country, this town, this city is unclean because of their involvement. I wonder if Sodom and Gomorrah were considered unclean. I think you would say without a doubt. Or else God would not have done what he did to Sodom and Gomorrah. They obviously must have been the epitome of uncleanness.

So, foul in a religious sense, spiritually defiled, or polluted and unclean. Physical uncleanness is being contaminated or soiled with physical dirt or filth. You know, how many times have we seen our little kids, our little babies when they begin to walk, and maybe we let them go outside and they fall down in the mud. Especially now with the heat, at least in Bakersfield. There may be a sprinkler system and Mom and Dad may just put a little diaper on him or her and they let him outside. You know, maybe they get into the posie beds or whatever and they get all muddy. They fall down two or three times. They come into the house and Mom says, oh look at you! You're filthy dirty. A little kid is dirty. Or maybe he did something in his diaper. And you say, look, you're filthy! Look what happened. We've all seen that, been there, we've experienced that in one way or another. We say, you're filthy! But God looks at things in a much deeper way than just the physical. In a much, much deeper way.

Someone can become ritually unclean by touching a dead body. Or some sort of body emission, which are all things we can relate to in the Old Testament. Or something that was diseased, an animal, a cow, a sheep, a lamb, or something that died of itself. You know the instruction in the Old Testament specifically says you are not to eat that. You're not to cut it up and serve it. You're to bury it. Because it died for some reason. It was diseased or something. But those examples were only to help mankind see that there are other applications to being unclean.

Spiritual uncleanness also includes idolatry. When God says you're an idolater, you're unclean. We say, oh, I get the picture. But we often don't associate being unclean with idolatry. Or pagan religious practices are also referred to in that same category of being unclean. Or practicing an ungodly lifestyle. And that's why obviously Sodom and Gomorrah must have been allowed to be cursed the way they were with fire raining down from heaven. And why God allowed certain families, certain countries, or said certain things about certain towns or cities, like they did about Jerusalem that they were all unclean. Because of their lifestyle.

For Christians any sin, whether by action, thought, or attitude is unclean. Listen to that. For Christians, for you and for me, any sin, whether by action, by thought, or by attitude is unclean. Is it any wonder that God tells you and me, don't touch the unclean thing.

We might say, of course, I don't know why God has to tell me not to touch that dead gopher. Of course I wouldn't touch it. He may be using that as an example, but it goes beyond that.

Let's consider another point. Knowing right from wrong is not natural for humans. Just like a little child in many instances that little child I described earlier can see something crawling on the cement, maybe a worm, and pick that worm up. And what do they do? First thing, they put it in their mouth. I know of somebody, and I won't tell you who it is, cute little girl, she's a grown woman now; when she was small saw a snail, picked it up and the next thing when the mother looked there was this green stuff coming out the side of her face here. The little kid is making this face. They can't tell the difference between a scoop of ice cream and a snail until they eat it. It is unclean. You know it and I know it. But probably some of your children - what have they picked up? When they pick things up the first thing a child wonders is what does it taste like? And put it in their mouth. You are constantly taking out some of those things that are dangerous, everything from a nail to something crawling around. I don't know why it is, but they have a tendency to put it in their mouth first and foremost.

Knowing right and wrong is not natural to humans. That's the reason why we read in **Proverbs 14:12 and Proverbs 16:25** *There is a way which seems right to a man (to a person), but its end is the way of death.* Maybe that's overemphasizing what the scripture says. But humans think hey, if this is the way I worship, if I worship by smoking peyote, by smoking drugs, by smoking marijuana, that's my way of serving my God. And people say, well yes, I guess that's right. You know that has been something that came out in the news 6-8 months ago, that some people in prison demanded having marijuana to smoke. Because that was the way they worshipped their god. And guess what, the state allowed them to worship their god! They would bring them in a certain amount of marijuana. They could smoke and say, well yeah, I'm with you. We're of one mind and one accord.

Notice what Paul was inspired to write back in **1 Corinthians 2:14**. It says, *But the natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him. Nor can he know them for they are spiritually discerned.* You and I, with that small portion of God's spirit in us, should very clearly be able to differentiate between right and wrong. And we do. Clean and unclean. The carnal unconverted mind cannot fully know spiritual truth, because it must be spiritually discerned. It must be spiritually discovered. It must be

spiritually spotted. I get it, I understand it. It must be spiritually grasped. It has to be spiritually perceived or spiritually comprehended or spiritually understood. And without God's spirit the average mind does not understand that. That's where you and I are unique. That's a tremendous blessing that you and I have of that gift of the Holy Spirit that God has given us. It doesn't jerk us around. It doesn't slap us. It doesn't push us or sit on us, or whatever. We sometimes wish it would.

Wouldn't it be great if every time we began to have a wrong thought there would be a 500 pound anvil that would fall from heaven? There's two feet. But every time we sinned or had a wrong attitude it fell a quarter of an inch closer to us. You know, about the time it begins to rub you, you're going to say, you know what, I'd better change my attitude. Because next time it's going to take half my arm off.

That sounds funny in one sense. But isn't that in essence what the people in the Old Testament were told to do? If you sin, you go slaughter a bull. That's all right. I've got fifty bulls out there. So he would continue in his sin, the big farmer or cattleman. Yeah, go ahead, slaughter another one. And he'd go out and sow his oats or whatever,. And after one day he goes out and says, by the way, where are my bulls? I only see one out there. They say, well Master, you have been having what you consider fun. And that's all you've got left is one bull. Do you think he's not going to say, wait a minute. Before I lose that one I'd better back off a little bit.

You know God did some very physical things to people in the Old Testament to teach them very strong spiritual principles. Principles that you and I are told to understand. And the only way we can understand them in a much better sense than they understood them in a physical sense is in a spiritual sense. And that's what God's spirit is there to help us understand.

So when God tells us to not touch the unclean thing we should realize, it's not just touching that dead animal. It's not being involved in something much bigger than that. Something that God has much more concern for our well-being and our eternity. He says don't be involved in that type of setting or conduct.

To the carnal mind uncleanness is natural because their thoughts are not God's thoughts. And even we at our own human best fall short, far short, but God doesn't expect us to stay that way.

We read what Jesus Christ said in **Matthew 5:48**. Very well-known scripture. The admonition there is, *therefore you shall be perfect*. We used to look at that and say, wait a minute. How can I be perfect in comparison to my Father in heaven? No, you see, it's a process. *Therefore you shall be perfect*. You shall be complete. You shall be intact. You shall be whole. You shall be unblemished, as it could read. You shall be pure. You shall be impeccable. Sometimes that means maybe even being fastidious to the irritation of someone else. But if it's what God requires it should be done. He says we should *be perfect just as your father in heaven is perfect*. So there's a lot that we can do. And I don't mean necessarily not being involved in things. But again, as Mr. Fish brought out, the mind is the most important thing. That's the only thing we're going to take into the world tomorrow with us. Not this body. Not all the good works that we have done or wanted to do. It's what character we have developed. Yet it's not the character that's going to determine whether we have eternal life or not. Because we don't earn our eternal life. I've said that several times. That is a free gift from God. But it is not apart from bringing every thought into subjection. Getting hold of one's mind and saying, mind, we're not going to do that. I'm not going to think that way. I'm not going to get that road rage.

I could associate so clearly with what Mr. Fish said. You get in the driver's seat, especially when you're an A type, and you always want to be the first one away from the stoplight. And you know there's somebody hiding behind that post over there. Because when you get there, sure enough, you hit that red light. I know there's somebody at every red light! That's just the way type A's are. Probably some of you feel the same way. And there's nobody out there. It's just that there are places to go, people to see and things to do. We should take a little more time and smell the roses. But our makeup doesn't seem to allow us to do that. So we are then to become perfect just as our Father in heaven is perfect.

Paul also reminded us when he wrote in **Philippians 2:5** to *let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*. And how many times have we heard as we come around to the Passover season, somebody could be doing something wrong to you and you say, get a hold of yourself.

I wonder how you or I would have reacted if we had been the one hanging on that stake with that Roman soldier. I'm going to get you. If I could get down from here I'd turn you every which way but loose.

And yet what was Christ's mental attitude? Father forgive them, they don't understand what they're doing. Right at the point when his side was being pierced. I think we begin to see the difference between unclean and clean. Christ's thoughts, Christ's approach, though it may have been hard, or appeared to be hard or even harsh at times, was nevertheless always very clean because of the end result. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.

God commands all of us to be clean. And there's no and, if, or buts about it. His command to us is to be clean. In the Old Testament those who were involved in things of the temple were commanded to be clean. And not to touch anything that was unclean. And again we can go through Leviticus and several of the other Old Testament books, and we can see when somebody did do something that would put them in a category of being unclean, they had to go through all types of washings and time periods. I don't mean this to sound gross. It was a natural thing, and it happens to 50% of the people. A lady, when she has her menstrual cycle, in the Old Testament what were they told to do? They were told to go outside of the camp. Why? Because they were unclean. Physically they were unclean. And they had to spend a certain amount of time, and when a lady had a baby she had to go outside and go through certain ritualistic things and washings and time, etc. But all of those were physical things to show you and me spiritual lessons. And I'll point a couple of those out in a few minutes.

Today we are told that we are the temple of the living God. That God's spirit dwells in us. That we are that temple. And that we are also his vessels, called for a specific use. We are referred to as peculiar people, a priesthood in the making, kings and priests in the making, we know and as described in **1 Peter 2:9**. We can read, *But you are a chosen generation*. This is talking about you and me. *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*. That's describing your being, where God puts you. Is it any wonder he tells you and he tells me, *don't touch the unclean thing*. Don't be involved in any of what we see. *Come out of her my people*, so that you don't have to experience the same hurt that the rest of the world that doesn't understand or chooses not to obey. What a loving God we serve.

That's why we also read in **2 Corinthians 6:17**, as Paul wrote, *Therefore come out from among them*. He's telling you and he's telling me, like Paul was inspired to write this to the brethren at Corinth when it was written. *Therefore come out from among them and be separate*. Be different. Be unique, says the Lord. *Do not touch what is unclean*.

Now by this time I hope we don't think he's saying, don't touch that dead rat. Don't touch that dead squirrel, or whatever it may be. No, he's talking about something much, much more encompassing than simply not touching something that is dead. He's talking about a lifestyle. He's talking about the attitude of what is around us. We are not part of this world but we're still in it. It's so easy, isn't it, to get a tinge of that road rage. Or it's so easy to all of a sudden feel the anger or the blood pressure go up because somebody said something or did something, especially when they affect you or yours. But then how do we feel when we see something gross on television. Or when we hear about something?

Some of the things on television, the Jerry Springer show, even to the point that it went before the council of Cleveland, I think it was, and they were going to try to remove him from there because of all the garbage that's put on for the sake of entertainment. And the things that are said and the things that are done. If you've never watched that, all I can tell you is, don't watch it. Don't waste your time. You talk about unclean. The way to not touch the unclean thing in that case is to change the channel or just turn the thing off and not even mess with it. Because we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood. We are kings and priests in the making.

We also read in **2 Corinthians 6:17** *Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you*. You and I must be able to recognize the difference between right and wrong, clean and unclean, and properly act on the right part of it.

Notice what was said to ancient Israel and also is applicable to you and to me today, right here, right now. I'm going to read from **Deuteronomy 23:14**. That was a long time ago, yet look how applicable it is to you and me today. It says, *For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp*. We say, that's good. Do we think that's

not what Israel wanted, when they were traipsing around out there in the Sinai desert for those 40 years? Do you think that they didn't want God to be with them? Absolutely! And this is a reaffirmation of that. *For the Lord your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and to give your enemies over to you.* Back then it may have been enemies. Today maybe it's problems. Wouldn't you want, like I want, whenever we're confronted with a problematic situation, to just simply say, oh Father, please help me. Please remove this from me. And now you see it and now it's gone.

That in essence was what God said. He would be there *to deliver you and to give your enemies over to you. Therefore,* or as a result of that, *your camp shall be holy.* You might say, wait a minute, I don't live in a camp. I live in an apartment. I live in a townhouse. I've got a little house over here. I live in a trailer park. Whatever. That's your camp. You and your family.

You say, wait a minute, I'm not married. I live by myself. That's your camp. You live wherever you live by yourself or with somebody, a wife, children, that's your camp. Do you want God to be there? Absolutely! *Therefore your camp shall be holy, that he may see no unclean thing among you and turn away from you.* Now we are continuing to see there is much more to this unclean thing. And it doesn't have to be something dead we're touching. It can be an attitude, an approach, a frame of mind, a lifestyle. He says, don't be part of that. You and I, as the camp of God, not only individually but collectively as a church, obviously request this. We as the church of God must be clean if we want God to be among us. And I think that's very basic and something we would all agree to.

In the Old Testament those who were unclean were put out of the camp, out of the congregation of God. Today, any that live an unclean lifestyle may have to be suspended or disfellowshipped until one repents or changes. If somebody is living in a real wretched way of life, they are carousing, they're getting drunk, they're smoking, foul language, they're working every other Sabbath, or whatever; Mr. Webber, or I, or some of the other elders, Mr. Vierra, or whomever, might have to go to that person and say, look, because of your conduct you're frankly not welcome in God's church. We love you. We want you to be here. But under those circumstances we cannot allow you to continue attending with us. So we're requesting that you stay out. What can I do to help you, to encourage you, but you cannot attend our Sabbath services.

Isn't that what 1 Corinthians was about partially? A man that was involved with his mother-in-law, committing incest, and the people just kept letting it go on. Everybody seemingly knew about it, until Paul found out about it. Then he wrote a letter and said, put him out. What did he say? He said, turn him over to Satan. That's pretty heavy, isn't it? He said, turn him over to Satan. Maybe he'll come to his senses and he'll be able to be saved at the end.

What about 2 Corinthians? Remember, the man changed. He evidently repented. But the people wouldn't let him back. But then he said, the man changed; bring him back. That in essence is partly what 2 Corinthians said.

So there is always this tremendous blessing after one does something wrong, of living a rotten way of life, it's called repentance, isn't it? The person then can be brought back into the fold. Even back then, when somebody did something wrong they put them out of the camp. And we can do the same thing today. The instruction in the New Testament is very, very clear on that. Suspension, or disfellowshipping, until one repents.

That's the reason we read back in **Numbers 19:20** where it says, *But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself,* meaning that there is something that the individual can do. There is a change. Not only an inward change, but an outward change as well. *But the man who is unclean and does not purify himself, that person shall be cut off from among the congregation because he has defiled the sanctuary of the Lord. The water of purification has not been sprinkled on him. He is unclean.*

You go back and you study that section in **Numbers 19**, around **verse 20**, and you see that it's talking about a lifestyle. That man is unclean because of his deeds, because of his conduct.

Let's consider something else. God has always commanded his priests, his ministers, to be clean and to teach the difference between clean and unclean. That's a command from God. Notice what the priests were told, the instruction that was given to them in **Leviticus 10:9**. *For the instruction there to the priest was, do not drink*

wine or intoxicating drink, you nor your sons with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. Pretty heavy, isn't it? It shall be a statute forever throughout your generation.

As I asked the congregation in Bakersfield this morning, how would you feel, what would be your reaction if I had tied one on Friday night and still came in Sabbath morning to give a sermon, and I'm still kind of sick at my stomach, and that pounding headache, and instead of water I had a little bit of vodka here. And I said, Well, brethren (slurred voice), I had a ball last night. Everything was just cool. I was great. I went to this party and there was a lot of drinking, and music.

How would they react? How would you react? You probably would write, or call, or telephone, or telegram home office so fast. And you should. And yet the instruction there was, *do not drink wine or intoxicating drink, you nor your sons* (sons, because remember in the Levitical priesthood it went from father to son right on down) *with you, when you go into the tabernacle of meeting, lest you die. It shall be a statute forever throughout your generation.*

Now I'm not standing up here to tell you this is still totally applicable. The concept, obviously, is a very good one. But as I told the brethren in Bakersfield this morning, for the 31-32 years that I've been a minister, I can't ever remember having anything to drink on Friday evenings. Once in a while when we've gone to someone's house for dinner, you know you have a little bit of wine, but I always thought, no, I want to be totally with a clarity of mind tomorrow. I have taken that admonition, personally, very strong. Why? Why were they told back then not to drink any wine or anything that was intoxicating?

Verse 10 says, *that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean. Very clear. Between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord has spoken to them by the hand of Moses.* What an awesome responsibility.

Notice **Ezekiel 44:23**. Again, talking about the ministry and the conduct God has always commanded his priests, to be clean and to teach the difference between clean and the unclean. *And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and the unholy, and cause them to discern* (not only teach but to help discern) *between unclean and clean.* Very clear. And there are several other very strong admonitions and commands in the Old Testament that are as applicable and as pointed as these few that I have just read to you in the last couple of minutes.

We also read in several places in God's word that tells us that even in the world tomorrow we will all still be teaching mankind the difference between right and wrong. Still instructing them to be clean and not to touch, or to be involved in, that which is unclean. Every one of you sitting here, in your continuation of growing, and overcoming, and of understanding God's law, and eventually being changed in the twinkling of an eye when Christ returns to set up God's kingdom on this earth as king of kings and Lord of Lords; part of your responsibility as you are training as a king and a priest is to eventually and continuously teach the physical beings for the next 1100 years the difference between clean and unclean.

Everyone here will have not only that opportunity but that awesome responsibility. And then who knows after that, when there is no more flesh and blood, when the new world, completely different from what we see now of physical things, will have been changed to spiritual things, and God says, OK, I'm glad you made it. Now that you're here, we're ready to begin. Who knows exactly what it is that we are going to be doing at that time. But what I do understand is when we read things like the fact that we're going to be a part of a government of which there is no end. And that eye and ear and understanding have not perceived the things God has in store for us. We cannot begin to imagine what it is. It is going to be much more than just floating around heaven all day, strumming a harp, and fluttering our wings once in awhile. I say that jokingly. I hope nobody says that's what I believe. Far from it. I'm being facetious about it.

Another thing to consider. We need to continue putting uncleanness out of our lives. It has to be an ongoing thing. Ongoing. As we continue to spiritually mature, which is the bottom line you and I face day in and day out, decision after decision, from morning, noon and night throughout the remainder of our lives, as we continue to spiritually mature, we must be able to discern good from evil, right from wrong, clean from unclean, and not only in what we eat or don't eat, but in our actions, in our thoughts, in our attitudes. Which is the main thing we will be taking into the world tomorrow with us.

We all understand that some things are always unclean. Sewage. Raw sewage is unclean. Drugs we would obviously put in the category of unclean. Coveting. All the commandments, don't take God's name in vain, remember the Sabbath, don't break the Sabbath, it just goes on and on. To not adhere to those things is obviously unclean. Coveting. The list could just go on and on and on. But some things are unclean only if used in the wrong way, such as alcohol. God says there's nothing wrong with alcohol. But after a certain amount, and again based on somebody's weight and size, man or woman, it's going to have a different effect on people. And we can look around, one out of ten has a drinking problem, an alcohol problem, because of a missing x, or y or whatever it is in the makeup of that individual. The way the body of that individual may metabolize that alcohol. Others of us have problems with food. We may eat like a bird but we look like a big crow or something. Some people can eat and eat and eat and their metabolism is such that they can't get enough. They're little skinny things. You call them Edge because you can't see them when they stand sideways. Then there are the people where nothing seems to be the problem. They may be partially spirit. Nevertheless.

So we understand that some things are always unclean. And some things could be unclean but they're not always. TV can be a tremendous medium. You can sit down and watch a movie with your children, or a movie in itself. I just can't help, maybe it's the way I think, but this new movie for children, Tarzan...maybe I shouldn't say anything. I won't. I see a few children, I won't say anything about it. So much for that. I shouldn't have brought it up. I'm sorry. Now you're going to wonder, what was he going to say about Tarzan? I was going to take my kids to see it tomorrow. That's fine. No, I will tell you. It's curiosity. Because the one segment I've seen three or four times as they advertise it, why would they even do this? I've pointed it out to my wife a couple of times. When Tarzan is swinging through these vines and then he sits there, and there's this beautiful lady. She's not Jane yet. She's still in her clothes. And he's never seen a woman and he's kind of looking. I don't know if you've noticed. But he reaches down to her dress and he looks under the dress. And I'm telling my wife, why would they do that? Why? Well you might sit there and think, what a dirty old man! No. The point is, why would they even do that? What are they teaching our little kids? What kind of kids are going to see Tarzan? And maybe the entirety of the whole movie has a good reason for it and it's fun and enjoyable and good. But just that one little piece, why? The cinematography of today's moviemaking is so incredible. And who backs it up? How many things have you seen lately that have to do with God? And good? And uplifting? If it's not killing, and maiming, and blowing up 20, 30, 50 cars... who is behind it all? Is it any wonder God says, don't touch the unclean thing? And he's not talking about something dead. He's talking about something much, much more important than that.

If you were going to take your children, fine. Maybe at that time you can say, Hon, you want some more popcorn? Maybe I shouldn't have said that, because it's supposed to be a nice family or child movie. But anyway, so much for that.

What is this unclean thing? None of us would bathe in an open cesspool, would we? Even if it was extremely hot, nobody would think of going into a cesspool. If all of you were absolutely thirsty, and your mouth was parched, and I put a big beautiful glass of here with ice in it and crystals forming around it, and there was a little baby here with a dirty diaper, and I took the dirty diaper off and just put one little corner of it in, and I said, come and drink it. It's cold. No! You wouldn't drink it. Even if it is tainted ever so little, you wouldn't want anything to do with it.

That even sounds repulsive to us. Who would even think of coming up with a crazy idea like that? And yet, is our attitude the same way toward the uncleanness of this world? I would venture to say, brethren, that it isn't. Watered down sewage is still sewage, isn't it? Sin should be as disgusting and repulsive to you and to me as sewage and an open cesspool would be to us. We must not be deceived that little bit of sin is OK. But we must be meticulous about our spiritual cleanliness.

Notice what we read in **James 1:27**. And I'll just let you put this in the context, maybe think about it, put a little star if you're taking notes - go back and read it and say, how could this apply? It could go several different directions. I'll leave that to you as a Bible study. But the instruction here in James 1:27 is *pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.* How could that apply? Think about it the next time you're thinking of Bible study. How does being unspotted from the world fulfill pure religion? Is it just visiting the widows and the fatherless? No. There's much more to it. One is to keep oneself unspotted from the world, because the world is unclean. And God says, don't touch the unclean thing.

The real thing that we all have to constantly work on is our mind, isn't it? That's where it all begins. And that's why we're told by the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:5, the process is to do everything we can by casting down arguments, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity. To what? To the obedience of Christ. Because God is clean. And it's bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

This isn't easy. It takes work. It takes concentration to be clean. There are temptations everyone must avoid at all cost. Like in the old cliché, like the plague. If your next door neighbor had the black plague, would you like to go over and see them? Not me! I'm getting out of town. Not only am I not going there. You would get away from that as quickly as you could.

When was the last time you began to see something on television or something in a movie or something in a song, and you would just say, listen to that. Look at that. Hon, come look at this. We've all done it. We are like sheep being taken in to slaughter. Hon, come look at this! You can't believe what this guy has on television. You are sitting there watching it, and saying, I can't believe it. We are so easily influenced. It's not easy. It does take concentration.

We all realize we are in the world, but we are not of this world. And therefore we cannot take, as authority, the world's definition of what is right and what is wrong. The world's definition is, come on, everybody else is doing it. Go ahead! Can you understand the pressure that our young people are in at school? That's why so much emphasis is put into summer camps, where we have the zone. That concept of the zone is a beautiful concept, an absolutely beautiful concept. Kids go there, they know they're not going to be put down, they know they're not going to be made fun of, they know they're going to be treated as equals, there's going to be respect, they're going to learn things about God. It's a beautiful setting, and it's going to get better. It can only get better. It only has to get better. And it will get better. The zone.

But the world's definition is, come on, try it. Go ahead. Everybody else is doing it. You don't want to be an oddball. We read in **Proverbs 6:27-28**, *can a man take fire into his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?* How close to the fire can one come without being burned? *Can one walk on hot coals and his feet not be scorched?* No, you can't do it.

You and I should easily be able to determine if something is right or wrong, good or bad, clean or unclean, by just simply asking, would Jesus Christ do this? Would this be something going around in Christ's mind? Would this be something Jesus Christ would carry in his heart, his mind, and his very being? Is this the mind of Jesus Christ? It's a very simple concept, isn't it? All of God's admonitions ring loud and clear, oh so loud and clear.

That's why we're told in **Ephesians 5:5**, *For this you know that no fornicator, no unclean person, nor covetous man who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.* Period. Very clear. We can't read that and say, I wonder what that means? Would you give me the definition of fornication? What if two people really love each other? Isn't that OK? What if a person is an idolater, but he's going to this idolatrous union over here, but he's learning the negative side of what God really is. That's man's thinking, isn't it? It's almost like getting in a court of law and somebody having an opponent back and forth. If you have a good lawyer you can get away with murder, I guess.

Well, the concept can continue to go and go. The formula is, confess our sins, repent, be forgiven, and be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and keep from touching the unclean thing. Even though we give it our best, we're still going to fall short. But as long as we don't use God's love and his forgiveness as license to continue in it, God will continue helping us.

That's why we read in **1 John 2:1**, *My little children, these things I write to you that you may not sin.* And if *anyone sins*, the admonition is remember, understand, *we have an advocate*, we have champion, we have a defender, an encourager, one who upholds, one who cleanses, *with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*. That's part of his responsibility to you and to me. He's there as our mediator. We will always have that mediator who sits at the right hand of God the Father who will always help us overcome. And help us to not touch the unclean thing.

Look at the encouragement that Paul makes for all of us in **Philippians 1:6**. *Being confident, being assured, being certain, being sure, he says, of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

So brethren, in conclusion, let's learn to clearly see what is right and what is wrong, and pray to our God to help us choose and do the right thing. That as kings and priests in the making, you and I can eventually teach and help people to distinguish between right and wrong. Between good and bad. Between the holy and the unholy. Between clean and the unclean. Looking to our elder brother, Jesus Christ, who can remove every stain and blemish, that he tells us about in **Isaiah 1:18**, where we read, *Come now, let us reason together says the Lord. Though your skins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient you shall eat the good of the land. But if you refuse and rebel, he says, you shall be devoured by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.*

Let's continue, brethren, striving to be the children of God, by doing our part in ridding ourselves of wrong things and not touching the unclean thing.