

# An Inside Job

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 04 June 2025

Preacher: Lee Roberts

[ 0 : 0 0 ] We'll be back in Mark tonight, and tonight's passage is a continuation of the events that we saw last week. In Mark 7, 1-5, the religious leaders challenged Jesus about why His disciples! ignored the ceremonial washing requirements before meals. Those ceremonial washing requirements! had been invented over the past, and over the past, and over the past, and over the past, over time by generations of religious leaders, and none of those requirements that the disciples skipped was required by the Mosaic Law. Then in verses 6-13, Jesus responded to the scribes and Pharisees by showing that they were wrongly teaching and training the people to value tradition more than Scripture. Jesus then gave them an example to prove His point, and He showed how the religious leaders allowed people to avoid their obligation to honor parents by saying that assets that should have been used to support their parents were devoted to God instead.

We'll learn in tonight's passage that the public has been watching the exchange between Jesus and the religious leaders. Jesus starts tonight's passage by providing an explanation to the people. Then He provides additional details to His disciples. Throughout this passage, we need to realize that the heart refers to the inner person or the seed of someone's mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

So the heart includes attitudes, affections, priorities, ambitions, and desires. With that as background, let's go ahead and read tonight's passage. That's Mark chapter 7, verses 14 through 23.

Speaking about Jesus, Mark chapter 7, 14 through 23 say, And He called the people to Him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand. There is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.

[ 2 : 0 5 ] Then some of you may notice that your translation skips verse 16 because it's not in the earlier manuscripts. Those of you with the King James, New King James, or New American Standard may have a verse 16 similar to, If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

Then resuming the ESV's translation in Mark 7, 17, we see, And when he entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable.

And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart but his stomach and is expelled?

Thus he declared all foods clean. Then he said, So here's the main idea.

It's short and simple tonight. The main idea is that sin starts within a person. So once again, sin starts within a person. The passage we looked at last time we were in Mark was a convicting passage, but this week's passage is even more convicting.

[ 3 : 3 7 ] Mark 7, 1 through 13, forced us to think about whether we value traditions more than Scripture. This week's passage forces us to come face to face with our own true character.

And if you ask a cross-section of the population today whether people basically are good, most people are going to say yes. And if you ask someone whether he or she is a good person, even more people will say yes.

When people sin or make bad decisions, we commonly hear people blame their circumstances, their parents, the government, or anything else other than themselves. The Bible presents a much different picture.

The Bible's characterization of people goes all the way back to Genesis 6, verse 5. Here is Genesis 6, verse 5. Then Jeremiah 17, 9 says, The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. Who can understand it? This teaching carries forward to the New Testament. Here's Romans 5, 12. Romans 5, 12 says, Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through

sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.

[ 5 : 05 ] Human nature has remained unchanged over the centuries. The Jews of Jesus' day also felt that people basically were good. Thinking that moral contamination came from external sources, they developed an elaborate system of external rituals and ceremonies that they thought would make them pure.

They wrongly assumed that if they looked good on the outside by attending the synagogue, honoring the law, and observing the traditions of the elders, God would deem them righteous on the inside.

Consequently, Judaism became a breeding ground for hypocrisy, externalism, and superficial legalism. Many such rituals and ceremonies involved the food that Jews ate, and some of those restrictions were prescribed by God.

But the people took compliance with those dietary restrictions too far. They felt that following the restrictions made them righteous. Warren Wiersbe said, The Jewish dietary laws were given by God to teach His chosen people to make a difference between what was clean and what was unclean.

No doubt there were also some practical reasons involved, such as sanitation and health. To disobey these laws was a matter of ceremonial defilement, and that was an external matter.

[ 6 : 26 ] Food ends up in the stomach, but sin begins in the heart. The food we eat is digested and the waste evacuated, but sin remains, and sin produces defilement and death.

We'll break tonight's passage into just two sections, starting with verses 14 through 16. And in verses 14 through 16, we see Jesus' exclamation.

So Jesus' exclamation is your first set of blanks. Here are Mark 7, verses 14 and 15 again. And he, of course, that's Jesus, called the people to him again and said to them, Hear me, all of you, and understand, there is nothing outside a person that by going into him can defile him, but the things that come out of a person are what defile him.

By calling the people to carefully heed his words, Jesus was doing more than just asking for their attention. He was underscoring the eternal significance of what he was about to say.

Christ had silenced the critics, and now he turns to the people gathered around him and elaborates on the subject of what makes a person defiled. The critics had said it was failure to wash the hands that defiled.

[ 7 : 45 ] Christ disagreed and showed what really defiled man. Here's a quote from H.A. Ironside. He said, The more conscientious an Israelite was, the more anxious and concerned he was about what he ate or drank, lest he even inadvertently take in something that was ceremonially unclean.

If he did eat something considered unclean, he would be defiled and unfit to join with the congregation of the Lord when they gathered together for worship in the temple.

In Mark 7, 14-16, our Lord laid down a great principle and emphasized a tremendous fact. Jesus declared that moral and spiritual defilement comes from within the man himself.

External things like meals eaten with ceremonially unwashed hands are not the source of spiritual impurity. Rather, the defilement that offends God is an internal spiritual reality that has a corresponding internal source.

Sinful pollution does not come from outside the sinner, but lies within him. Matthew's gospel records the same teaching in Matthew chapter 15.

[ 9 : 00 ] Here is Matthew's version of how Jesus opened his statement to the crowd. This verse is Matthew chapter 15, verse 11. And in Matthew chapter 15, verse 11, Matthew records Jesus as saying, It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a person.

Jesus' point was that moral contamination is evidenced by what comes from the mouth rather than what goes into the mouth. The mouth is the most ready, immediate, and constant exit for the evil inside of us all.

Proverbs 6.12 characterizes a wicked man as one who goes about with crooked speech. Proverbs 15.28 adds, The mouth of the wicked pours out evil things.

And when Jesus spoke of the things which come out of the man, he was referring not only to a person's speech, but also the desires, thoughts, and attitudes behind his speech.

Because the heart is evil, wicked lust, words, and actions inevitably come out, and those are what defile the man. Jesus' words likely surprised and probably even shocked the people hearing him.

[10:18] However, they should have known that Jesus simply was restating Old Testament teaching. Listen to what God told Samuel when Samuel was reviewing Jesse's sons to determine which one God had selected to be the Israelite king after Saul.

1 Samuel 16.7 probably is a verse that you know well, and here is 1 Samuel 16.7. But the Lord said to Samuel, Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him.

For the Lord sees not as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart. How about Proverbs 21.2?

Proverbs 21.2 says, Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. Then 1 Chronicles 28.9 records part of what David said to Solomon.

In 1 Chronicles 28.9, David said, And you, Solomon, my son, know the God of your father, and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind.

[11:27] For the Lord searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.

Here's 1 Kings 8.61. 1 Kings 8.61 says, Let your heart, therefore, be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments as at this day.

For one last cross-reference on this point, here's 2 Kings 20.3. 2 Kings 20.3 is part of what King Hezekiah prayed to the Lord.

And he prayed, Now, O Lord, please remember how I have walked before you in faithfulness and with a whole heart and have done what is good in your sight. And Hezekiah wept bitterly.

We looked at several cross-references here to show that Jesus' words in our passage tonight aligned with what Israel had been hearing for centuries. Israel's kings, including David, Solomon, and Hezekiah, knew that God cared about the heart rather than external rituals.

[12:42] Over time, though, compliance with external rituals had taken precedence over purity of the heart. And that is why Jesus' words likely sounded so revolutionary to the people.

John MacArthur noted, Some of Israel's rituals and regulations had been prescribed by God in the Mosaic Law. Certain foods were forbidden. Certain medical issues such as leprosy and touching a dead body rendered a person ceremonially unclean.

Yet those things were intended as symbols or illustrations of the true nature of man's sinful heart and his desperate need for divine cleansing. A person who was ceremonially defiled needed external cleansing to participate in public worship.

This provided a powerful picture of the fact that every sinner requires divine forgiveness and internal cleansing before coming into God's presence. If you need proof that the rituals and regulations prescribed in the Mosaic Law were symbols or illustrations of a sinful heart and the heart's need for cleansing, the book of Hebrews provides that proof.

We'll look at a few cross-references in Hebrews now. Hebrews chapter 8 verse 5 speaks of earthly priests. And here are Hebrews chapter 8 verses 5 and 6.

[14:07] They, talking about the earthly priests, serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly things. For when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God saying, See that you make everything according to the pattern that was shown you on the mountain.

But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better since it is enacted on better promises.

Listen to the end of Hebrews chapter 9 verse 9 through Hebrews chapter 9 verse 14. Here are those verses. According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered that cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper but deal only with food and drink and various washings, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest for the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands that is not of this creation, he entered once for all into the holy places not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood thus securing an eternal redemption.

For if the blood of goats and bulls and the sprinkling of defiled persons with the ashes of a heifer sanctify for the purification of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

[15:53] Then Hebrews chapter 10 verse 1 says for since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities it can never by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year make perfect those who draw near.

Hebrews chapter 10 verse 22 references what is necessary to draw near to God. Hebrews chapter 10 verse 22 says let us draw near with the true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

you can see from these Hebrew references that the rituals and regulations only were symbols or illustrations of a sinful heart.

What God really requires is a pure heart. Because the source of defilement was spiritual and internal it could not be removed by physical washings and external rituals.

Jesus spoke here in a moral rather than a medical sense. A person is not defiled morally by what he eats even if his hands are not ceremonially washed.

[17:14] Jesus was declaring null and void the entire mosaic system of clean and unclean foods and Mark will make that point clear later on in tonight's passage. Jesus' enemies realized that he was breaking down one of the walls that separated the Jews from the Gentiles.

The law itself remained in effect until Jesus died on the cross. But holiness has always been a matter of the heart and a right relationship with God by faith.

Ceremonial purity was a matter of external obedience to a law as evidence of that faith. Moses made it clear in Deuteronomy that God wanted love and obedience to come from the heart and not be merely outward obedience to rules.

Here's a sampling of what Deuteronomy teaches about the importance of the heart. These verses are Deuteronomy chapter 6 verses 4 and 5.

Deuteronomy 6, 4, and 5 say, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

[18:25] heart. Here's Deuteronomy chapter 10 verse 12. Deuteronomy 10, 12 says, And now Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul?

Check out Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6. Here is Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

Jesus took on the whole rabbinical system of ritual purification, especially the elaborate food and cleansing regulations. He declared it's not what you eat and it's not what you drink.

Nothing from the outside defiles you or contaminates you. He pinpointed man's problem not as something outside himself, but as something inside, something internal that produces defilement. Before we leave this section, let's touch briefly on Mark chapter 7 verse 16, the verse that some of you have in your translations. That's the verse that the New King James renders as if anyone has ears to hear, let him hear.

[19:59] Most modern translations omit that sentence or place that sentence in brackets. It does not occur in the earliest, most reliable manuscripts of Mark's gospel here.

Jesus did use this phrase on other occasions though, and what we see here is that even though he used it on other occasions, it was not part of the text here.

But just in case Jesus did say that phrase here in Mark 7, 16, this is what we said about the phrase when it first appeared in Mark's gospel, and we first saw it in Mark chapter 4, verse 9, and the phrase's meaning in Mark 4, 9 is the same as it would be in Mark 7, verse 16.

When Jesus is talking about ears to hear, he's talking about spiritual ears. Not everyone who heard him speak was able to understand the truth that he was explaining.

The meaning of the parable would only be revealed to those whose hearts were ready to receive it. For the rest, it was an unsolvable riddle. The religious leaders, along with many of the lay people in the multitudes, already had rejected Jesus.

[21:09] The judgment on them was that their hearts and ears were closed to his teachings.

Consequently, they were not given any interpretation of the parables. Yet, Jesus' statement served as an invitation to all believers who were willing to listen.

To those believers, he gave the explanation. So, we've seen Jesus' explanation, and in the last section of this passage, we see Jesus' explanation.

Jesus' explanation. Just like we said, Jesus gave parable explanations to all believers. We see him give that explanation here. Let's read Mark chapter 7 verses 17 through 19 again.

Speaking about Jesus, the verses say, And when he had entered the house and left the people, his disciples asked him about the parable. And he said to them, Then are you also without understanding?

Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile him, since it enters not his heart, but his stomach, and is expelled? Thus he declared all foods clean.

[ 22 : 23 ] Jesus' words to the crowd astonished even his own disciples, so accustomed had they been to looking at things from the ritualistic standpoint. When they had left the multitude and were in the house alone with Jesus, the disciples asked him to explain what he meant.

Jesus' question in verse 18 served as a mild rebuke to those disciples. It was less than a year until the cross, and they were still struggling with basic truths like the priority of inner righteousness over external ritual.

It's likely that the disciples comprehended some aspects of the truth of what Jesus was disclosing, but his teaching was so contrary to what they'd been taught that they initially found it difficult to accept.

But even with the mild rebuke, we see that Jesus was always ready to open up truth to sincere inquirers. Jesus explained that outward things such as food and drink were only material.

They could never affect the spirit of the man. Food of any kind does not enter into the heart but passes through the digestive tract. Food makes no impression whatsoever on the soul or spirit of the one who has ingested it.

[ 23 : 38 ] Jesus was very direct in his explanation to the disciples. He noted that food and drink go into the body and then come out of the body. Jesus was not denying that there are hurtful and even poisonous foods that might seriously injure someone physically.

What he had in mind here was a defilement of spirit which makes a person unfit for fellowship with God. Mark adds a parenthetical note at the end of verse 19.

it says, Thus he declared all foods clean. There's an important lesson here. Before Jesus declared all foods clean, a Jew who ate unclean foods was not defiled by the food but by his disobeying God's command.

Jesus' explanation was given privately to his disciples when they asked him about the parable. His explanation seems obvious to us, but we must remember that these twelve men had been brought up under the strict Jewish dietary code that categorized all foods as either clean or unclean.

In fact, Acts chapter 10 verses 9 through 16 suggests that Peter kept a kosher household for years even after he had heard this truth.

[ 24 : 58 ] We see from that that it's not easy to change our religious traditions. Acts chapter 10 verses 9 through 16 are the verses where God was preparing Peter to go to Cornelius the Gentile.

God gave Peter the vision of all animals on a sheet. Then God told Peter to kill and eat them. Let's look at the end of the dialogue between Peter and God.

These verses are Acts chapter 10 verses 14 through 16. But Peter said, By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean.

And the voice came to him a second time, What God has made clean do not call common. This happened three times and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

Going back to our Mark text, let's look at Mark chapter 7 verse 20. Here is Mark chapter 7 verse 20. Jesus said, What comes out of a person is what defiles him.

[ 26 : 05 ] Jesus clearly states the source of true defilement. A person is defiled morally by what he thinks in his heart, even though he may scrupulously observe outward purity rituals.

Jesus was contradicting the rabbinic view by stating that sin proceeds from within. Tying this passage back to the ceremonial cleansing referenced in the first verses of the chapter, John MacArthur noted, It is not unwashed hands that defile a person, but an unwashed soul.

So once again, it is not unwashed hands that defile a person, but an unwashed soul. Let's look at Mark chapter 7 verses 21 through 23 now.

Jesus continued speaking there and he said, For from within, out of the heart of man come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

All these evil things come from within and they defile a person. The word thoughts there in the original Greek is a general term referring to a person's inward reasoning or perception.

[ 27 : 31 ] Because the heart is evil, man's intentions, designs, ideas, motives, and musings are also depraved. Out of this, the corrupt heart, flow evil words, evil actions, and evil attitudes.

The Lord gave six of each. the Pharisees and scribes loved to produce legalistic lists of external things either to do or to avoid. Jesus articulated his own list defining the true nature of spiritual defilement by listing the kinds of wickedness that live in and proceed from corrupt hearts.

As we dive into this unpleasant list of sins, consider this. Every human heart has the root of every human sin in it. It is entirely possible to look nice on the outside while being dead on the inside.

The most deadly contamination is not what I touch. The most deadly contamination is what is in my heart. J.C.

Ryle said, there is a deep truth in these words which is frequently overlooked. Our original sinfulness and natural inclination to evil are seldom sufficiently considered.

[ 28 : 47 ] Human wickedness is often attributed to bad examples, bad company, unusual temptations, or the snares of the devil. It seems forgotten that everyone carries a fountain of wickedness within.

We need no bad company to teach us and no devil to tempt us in order to run into sin. We have within us the beginning of every sin under heaven.

And then he continued, all of us, whether high or low, rich or poor, masters or servants, old or young, learned or unlearned, all of us have by nature such a heart as Jesus here describes.

The seeds of all the evils here mentioned lie within us all. They may lie dormant all our lives. They may be kept down by the fear of consequences, the restraint of public opinion, the dread of discovery, the desire to be thought respectable, and above all by the almighty grace of God, but everyone has the root of every sin inside.

This section is why I said earlier that this passage of Scripture is even more convicting than the passage we looked at last time. None of us likes to admit that we have the root of every sin inside of us.

[ 30 : 09 ] Jesus' list of six representative evil actions began with sexual immorality, and Jesus used the form of the Greek word from which the English word pornography is derived, and this is a general reference to sexual sin.

Next, he identified theft, and the related verb there is klepto, and it provides the basis for the English word kleptomaniac. murder talks about the illicit taking of another person's life.

Adultery is the form of the Greek word meaning sexual sin that violates the marriage covenant, and in Jesus' next list, coveting, a reference to desires and behaviors motivated by greed and avarice.

All those actions are included in the second half of the Ten Commandments. The disciples would have immediately recognized them as flagrant transgressions. And according to Matthew chapter 15 verse 19, Jesus also mentioned bearing false witness in this context.

Completing this category of evil, Jesus added wickedness, and it's a general reference to iniquity that encompassed everything else that violates God's law and God's holy will.

[ 31 : 30 ] But Jesus wasn't done yet. He continued by denouncing six representative evil attitudes next. And those evil attitudes lie behind the wicked actions that we just looked at.

Those attitudes include deceit, and that means craftiness, lying, and deception. Then he listed sensuality, a reference to the unbridled lust of a dirty mind.

He talked about envy, and the word envy translates two Greek words, meaning I and evil. evil, so the phrase literally could be translated as evil eye, and he used it here to describe eyes full of jealousy and hatred.

Slander comes next, and slander refers to abusive and injurious speech toward others. Then comes pride, and pride describes feelings of superiority, arrogance, and self-promotion.

In the same way that the word wickedness summarized the evil actions in Jesus' list, foolishness encompassed the previous attitudes that he had articulated.

[ 32 : 36 ] It's a general term for moral folly and senselessness. Ensuring that the disciples did not miss his point, Jesus then reiterated the truth that all these things proceed from within, and those are the things that defile the man.

With this catalog of sins, Jesus made his meaning perfectly clear. The sins a man conceives in his heart and commits brings him into defilement, and that is, into debt to God.

Food does not stain the heart, and refraining from various foods does not prevent the heart from being stained. Therefore, it's the heart that needs attention, not the diet.

We have all kinds of conflicting thoughts in our minds, but what we really believe is that which drives our behavior. Ideas may go in and out of our ears, and we may entertain them for a while in our thinking, but that which pierces the heart determines how we live.

A man is defined by what he holds in his heart, and if the heart is evil, there will be evil thoughts, adulteries, sexual immoralities, murders, thefts, covetousness, and all the other sins that Jesus lists here, plus several more.

[ 33 : 54 ] Eating or refraining from certain foods will not change this list one bit, nor will washing our hands. It's the heart that has to be cleansed. And even though we hate to admit it, we can see the roots of these sins within us if we truly are honest with ourselves.

Most people, including the religious leaders of Jesus' day, failed to be that honest with themselves. The Pharisees and scribes failed to understand that their corruption was on the inside.

They appeared fastidiously religious, and their superficial self-righteousness was infinitely inadequate because of that. Like all sinners, they needed new hearts that were regenerated by the Spirit of God.

Yet when Jesus confronted their hypocrisy, they spurned him in angry unbelief, plotted his murder, and committed spiritual suicide for themselves.

So remember the main idea, that is that sin starts within a person. Several times, especially in the last section, we have referenced the need for a new heart or a clean heart.

[ 35 : 03 ] And that begs an obvious question. How do we get a new or a clean heart? Well, for the answer to that question, let's look at what the Bible says.

Turn over to Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 36 is a passage that the Israelites, particularly those scribes and Pharisees, should have known well.

We'll look at a rather long cross-reference in Ezekiel 36, beginning with verse 16. Ezekiel speaking here, and let's read Ezekiel 36 verse 16 through verse 27.

The word of the Lord came to me, son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds. Their ways before me were like the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity.

So I poured out my wrath upon them for the blood that they had shed in the land, for the idols with which they had defiled it. I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed through the countries.

[ 36 : 15 ] In accordance with their ways and their deeds, I judged them. But when they came to the nations, wherever they came, they profaned my holy name, in that the people said of them, these are the people of the Lord, and yet they had to go out of his land.

But I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the nations to which they came. Let's pause here for a second or two.

We've just heard the bad news. The Israelites committed horrible sins, like we all have. But starting with Ezekiel 36, verse 22, here comes good news.

We might have expected God to have said something like, therefore I'm going to wipe out all of you forever. But beginning with Ezekiel 36, verse 22, look at what God said instead.

He told Ezekiel, therefore, say to the house of Israel, thus says the Lord God, it is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am about to act, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations to which you came.

[ 37 : 28 ] and I will vindicate the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations and which you have profaned among them. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, declares the Lord God, when through you I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

Notice all the times that God uses the word I. Nothing is changed from those Old Testament times. God must be the one to change and cleanse the deceitful human heart.

Look at just Ezekiel 36, 25 through 27 again. God said, I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. [ 38 : 51 ] And I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

In another Old Testament passage that the Israelites of Jesus' day should have known, listen to what God said through Jeremiah. Jeremiah. Here are Jeremiah 31, verses 31 through 34. Jeremiah 31, 31 through 34 say, Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts and I will be their God and they shall be my people.

And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sins no more.

[ 40 : 23 ] Notice once again there that everything is done by God. The godly ancestors of the people in Jesus' day knew that God must be the one to provide a clean heart.

Here's what King David wrote in Psalm 51 after his adultery with Bathsheba. Here are Psalm 51 verses 1 and 2.

David said, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

A few verses later, we see these words in Psalm 51 verses 6 through 10. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness. Let the bones that you have broken rejoice.

[ 41 : 33 ] Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Because of our sinful hearts, all of us deserve death and eternal separation from God. Salvation requires an inner transformation, a new heart.

And the New Testament identifies that reality as the miracle of regeneration and the new birth. For the sake of time, we'll only look at one cross-reference about the miracle of regeneration.

Listen to what Paul wrote to believers in Titus chapter 3 verses 3 through 7. Here are Titus chapter 3, 3 through 7.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

[ 42 : 38 ] But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Those who harden their hearts to the good news of the gospel like the Pharisees and the scribes did will face eternal judgment. But those whose hearts have been made new by the power of God have become new creatures in Christ.

As those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they delight in hiding God's word in their hearts. That way they can serve the Lord in loving obedience. So the key is that we must love one another earnestly from a pure heart.

Though believers' hearts once were characterized by all sorts of wicked actions and attitudes, they are now divinely empowered to live in a way that pleases God. Writing about tonight's passage, J.C.

Ryle said, how thankful we ought to be for the gospel when we read these verses. The gospel contains a complete provision for all the needs of our poor, defiled nature.

[ 44 : 07 ] The blood of Christ can cleanse us from all sin. The Holy Spirit can change even our sinful hearts and keep them clean when they are changed. The person who does not glory in the gospel can surely know little of the plague that is within.

So how do we know that we can be cleansed of all sin? Well, quite simply, the Bible tells us so. Here's 1 John 1.9. Of course, 1 John 1.9 says, If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Let's pray. Father, these are difficult verses to look at. It's hard for us to admit that all of us have the root of every one of these sins within us.

But they also should make us very thankful that despite that fact, You have chosen to save us anyway, and You have chosen to give us a clean heart. Lord, we pray that You continue to sanctify us as we learn more and more about You and help us to be more willing to share Your gospel with others.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. you