

# UNCLEAN

By Steve Stutzman

Some time ago I made a few remarks about something being “unclean”, and immediately became aware that it was not well understood. I don’t claim to comprehend it all, but here are a few thoughts regarding this notion, “unclean”.

In the Jewish culture and Law, there were 3 levels of things to be avoided.

Unclean: Cleansing required time, washing, or blood sprinkling... and sometimes inspection by Priests.

Sin: Cleansing or forgiveness required the shedding of blood.

Death sin: No cleansing available, death sentence imposed.

These three things are obviously not equal, based on how they were viewed and treated. I believe there were specific reasons for that, and can point to it in Scripture extensively... another time. Right now, suffice it to say they were not equal. The three concepts clearly made their way into NT thought and teaching; however, with somewhat of a different slant, and so are often not understood well. Allow me to point, for example, at this verse: “*1Jo 5:16 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. :17 All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.*” Here there is a clear line drawn between death sin, and other sin referred to as “all unrighteousness.” (Because of this distinction, we handle death sins [murder, adultery, sex with animals, cursing parents, incest] differently than other offenses.)

Sin is a direct violation of God’s Nature and Character, and condemns us to hell... until, that is, the precious blood of Christ is applied to our balance scale in the Judgment Hall of God. After that, God stops keeping inventory of the sin (Rom. 4:7-8, Heb.10:17, 2 Cor.5:19) and can forgive us in complete justice. (1 John 1:9) If we say there are none of these types of issues in our lives..... ummmmm, then read 1 John 1:8.

What then is unclean? In the OT Law, there were a lot of specifics given about which animals were clean or unclean, don’t have hare in your stew or eat bacon, etc etc. There was also many other things involved, like touching bodily excretions, diseases like leprosy, touching dead

bodies, menstrual cycles and such like. It does not seem like God ever stated WHY these things were “unclean”, only that they were, and that they were to be avoided.

The Jews of Jesus day were so stuck on the particulars, they lost track of the realities involved. This is not intended to be an exhaustive study or scholarly work, so bear with me here: But it seems to me that God was restricting contact with certain things because OF THEIR ASSOCIATIONS. No scavengers were allowed to be eaten, because of their association with death. The people were not allowed to scavenge either, as the Believers in Acts also heard. (Acts 15:29) Sick folks like lepers, were not to be touched and hugged, etc. because of the association with death and disease. The same was true for all bodily fluids and excretions. God is HOLY, and He was asking His people to separate themselves from all smell and association with death, curse, disease, filth, evil, sickness, sin, etc etc. This was especially true when coming to meet God, or worship. (Psalm 24:3-4) Jesus, however, made it relatively clear that it is not what goes IN that defiles (makes unclean), but that which comes out. (Matt. 15:16-20)

In today’s world, Christians grapple blindly with these things in their own lives and congregations, and in relating to the culture about them. We seem to have lost track almost completely of the notion of “unclean”, or of “clean” for that matter. ( this Greek word **akathartos** is generally used to describe the demonic realm) Most Evangelicals dismiss the notion as ‘Law’ and disregard it entirely. In the process, the idea that a Holy God is asking us to divorce ourselves from all that smells of the death, disease, and wickedness around us is dismissed as an archaic notion of bygone dead religion.

Problem is, our association and kissing of death, makes death rub off on us: Our fondling of the cursed eventually makes us friends of a curse: our cuddling with disease and filth brings us to a place of filthy living; and our gentle loving massaging of sin brings with it a collaboration with evil that is appalling. We bring this filth and rot along with us to worship... then wonder why the Heavenly Dove shies away from our services. “Grace, Grace” we cry, and are sure that a Loving God would never care at all about such trivial details of life.

God does not detail for us what He sees to be “unclean “ in our world, or culture, today. He does, however, remind us that “touch not the unclean thing” is a prerequisite to His actual receiving us as sons. .... “ *2Co 6:17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.* “ ... and knowing Him as a Father.

So people ask me, “What is unclean? What are all the things we need to avoid?”

Really? Do we need a list? What is wrong with us for even wanting one?

When you see something is associated with evil, avoid it. I don't have a TV in my home. I do not think having one, or watching it, is sin. It is, however, in my understanding unclean. Ask yourself this: “What is it associated with?” Lust. Death. Lies. Evil. Hate. Immorality. Pretense. Sin. Debauchery. Worthless vanity. Games. Disinformation. Murder. Waste. Greed. Shall I go on? In my humble opinion, I do not need this kind of association and coddling of unrighteousness in my life; in fact, having it around gives me desire for a cleansing, a need for a bath. So, I simply don't have it. I do not condemn folks who do have one; I am simply trying to take what God says, and what He communicates to me personally, seriously.

People want to grow up, and be used of God. We want to be strong and mature. *“But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”* (Heb. 5:14) If we want to be a vessel unto honor, there are some things that have to be identified in our lives, and withdrawn from... not only if they are EVIL, but because they are ASSOCIATED with evil, and therefore are unclean. What we do, or don't do.... what we allow, or do not allow.... needs to extend beyond “sin” to the unclean. *“2Ti 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. 21 If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work.”*

Ask God if there is something, anything, in your life that is unclean... that is defiled by association. When you locate it, consider the cost of taking a personal stand on it. Do not wait for “conviction” on the issue; and don't ask for revelation about it, if you have no intention of following through. Don't waste a lot of breath trying to get anyone else to see your point, just live it. Ask yourself, “How clean do I want to be?” Guard yourself continually against an attitude that would use your choices as a platform on which to compare yourself to others. Love Him, live it, Love others.

P.S.... Please do not confuse this with Romans 14, where an entirely different Greek word is used. Thanks.