

## "Just How Clean?" I Peter 2:1-12

### Introduction

If you are visiting today, we are in the middle of a series called *Doctrines that will change your life*. Our goal is to take a *doctrinal* truth from Scripture and ask the question, *so what?* Last week we considered the sinfulness of man and discovered that sin is one of the most powerful forces in our lives. It touches every part of our being. The result of sin is death. It is so comprehensive that in God's eyes, apart from Christ, even things that seem to be good are destroyed by sinful motives.

There is not a person sitting in the room today that doesn't have a checkered past when it comes to sin. There is not one of us who doesn't have a list of regrets when it comes to our thoughts, actions, words and attitudes. In that regard, we are truly all in the same proverbial boat.

I asked someone this last week, what his particular view of his sinful past is. *What have you done with your sin?* His response was like many others. I just try and do better. I try and forget those mistakes and move forward. Let me ask you the same question as we start this morning. What about your sin? How has it been dealt with? Where is it? What's its status? Is it enough to put it behind you and press on to do better?

Today, in a follow up to last week, we want to ask the question, *Just how clean can we become?*

We're going to see that Jesus Christ has satisfied God's penalty for every single one your sins if you are a believer in Jesus. And the *so what* of that is going to lead you into a practical battle for holiness and for purity on a daily basis.

### [I Peter 2:1-12]

Having just studied the sinfulness of man, this passage offers us hope for a total and complete forgiveness and cleansing. In these words we've just read, God identifies people as holy. Verse 9 stands as a glowing testimony from God for a bunch of people that have been plagued with sin. *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's won possession . . .*

And verse 5 gives this description: you are *living stones, being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.*

That's a pretty amazing thing considering we've already learned that sin kills us. But God now considers us *living stones*. Our sin had cut us off from God – separated us from Him; but now He calls us a holy priesthood – that is, priests who are able to come into the very presence of God. And He says that we are able to make *spiritual sacrifices that God actually finds acceptable*. In other words they are of the Spirit and pure enough to be pleasing to Him.

How can this be? Once we have become convinced that we have indeed sinned against a holy God, then the question of what happens to that sin becomes a very relevant one. Let's admit that there are several ways that you might be tempted to think about dealing with your sin in order to make yourself presentable to God.

1. You could adopt an attitude like the one I was just referring to that says, I must simply move forward, try and learn from my mistakes and do better tomorrow.
2. You could conclude, as many have, that God is loving and more than willing, if I'm sorry, to look the other way and *just forget my sin*. This idea believes that God is willing to kind of ignore passed indiscretions and sins and let us start anew.
3. You could believe that God will change you so that you become more pleasing to Him and that He then accepts you and forgives you based on your new way of living.

But here's the problem with all of these. If God allowed any of these ways to get rid of your sin, He would make Himself out to be a liar. God has clearly said that we are guilty before Him because of our sin. And He has made it clear that He has established a penalty for sin that must be paid – that penalty is death. So, if God is going to be faithful to Himself, He can in no way simply look the other way when sin is committed. He can't just forget it and pretend it didn't happen. Nor is it adequate to compensate for past sins by turning over a new leaf and doing better. The old sin still must be reckoned with.

So, some way, some time, somehow, God's justice must be satisfied by payment for sin and our guilt has to be removed. It's hard to imagine how God could forgive us and at the same time satisfied His righteous standards of justice.

But that of course is exactly what happened at the cross. The Bible calls this the doctrine of justification. For those whom God has or will save

from their sins, every single one of your sins was taken by Christ at the cross and paid for by His death. Justice was done, because Jesus, who is both God and man; and who lived perfectly while here on earth, was able to satisfy His Father's demand for justice by taking our judgment upon Himself. And at the same time while both removing our sin and our guilt, gave us in its place His holiness.

So that's the basics of not only the doctrine of justification and forgiveness, but it is the heart of the gospel. Now the question is so what. Maybe on no other subject is the so what more critical. Here are three practical implications of this doctrine.

1. Your response to it will reveal your eternal destination and your well being.

Paul said it this way; *you are justified by grace through faith*. In the passage before us this morning, Peter describes this faith (verse 4) as *coming to Him*. We use this language today to indicate faith. We ask about a non-Christian friend, *Has he come to Christ yet?* We mean, has he come to faith.

Now, if you want to be sure this is Peter's intent, look back up through chapter 1 and you will see this is exactly the context. (Read verses 5, 7-9, and 20 and 21). So when we come to 2:4 (*and coming to Him as to a living stone*) we know he's talking about faith.

Now here's what I want you to understand. Putting your trust and faith in Jesus Christ is not only the only means of forgiveness – the only way that your sins and your guilt can be removed from you, it is also the means of your ultimate satisfaction. Peter quotes from both Isaiah and the Psalm when referring to Jesus as the cornerstone. But what

does he promise? Verse 6, *Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed.*

So many people think that becoming a Christian and living by faith will be a real drag. But that's not true. A life lived by faith in Jesus Christ is a life that will not know disappointment, because in Christ we are offered a life **free from** the weight of guilt and **free to** live life to the fullest, no matter what the circumstances. Peter calls it a life of precious value (vs. 7).

So the first *so what* of this doctrine is that it leads us to a life of faith. Without the possibility of being totally forgiven, who would care?

## 2. You have a new identity.

I've not watched these TV shows that are given to giving someone a complete make-over. But I guess you can see what it's like to give your house, your wardrobe, your personality and your lifestyle a complete makeover. It's a do over. There's something attractive to us about starting over, about become a new person. I think it speaks of a general discontentment and to our inner desire to be better and to be different.

The *so what* of the gospel teaches that when we are justified by faith we become a new person. The old is passed away and new things have come. We have put on Jesus Christ. Our sinful garments of rebellion are replaced with the glorious robes of Christ's righteousness. We are new person.

But it's often hard to believe. You have the same body. You have the same memories. Your circumstances are usually no different. But God says you're born again. Peter says here that you're like a new born baby. There is a way for a new start and it comes through Christ.

Peter actually goes all out here to convince us that something substantially different happens to a person when he/she comes to faith. Look at the list he piles up in verses 9 & 10 (read). What a different list this is than the kinds of things we saw last week. Apart from faith in Jesus we are cut off from God, reject and despised, under the curse and wrath of God, we are in darkness, we are dirty, we are unable to do anything that pleases Him or proclaims His excellencies.

Now we belong to Him and He has crowned us with beauty and royalty and holiness. I still remember when the Moody's first started to come to church few years ago. And like any new family, I was working hard at getting to know them and they me. One day I ran into little Colin. It was not at the church and I was dressed casually, not at all like a Sunday morning. And Colin looked at me with a real funny expression trying to place me and all of sudden a big smile broke out on his face and he exclaimed, *Hey, you're one of those God people.* What a profound observation. And what a biblical identification. When you come to Christ, you have a new identity. You belong to God.

### 3. You have a new standard.

How clean are you in Christ? Absolutely washed and forgiven. But the outcome of your forgiveness and your new identity is that you are to live in a manner that is faithful to who you have become.

Back in chapter 1, after reviewing the gospel, Peter writes in verses 13-16 *Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be*

*holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy.*

And here in our passage, 2:11, 12. *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Look, your growth in Christ is different than your forgiveness and justification, but they are not unconnected. You are to strive for holiness and purity because this is who you are.

The world wants to keep you in its grip. But sin is dirty and it kills. Anger, slander, gossip, lust, lying, stealing, cheating, addictions, drunkenness – there is no place for these in your life. Because Jesus Christ died on the cross for you, you are now in a battle against the fleshly lusts that wage war against your soul

Are you engaged in that war today? Are you confessing your sins daily? Are you taking steps to keep your mind and your heart pure - from the life threatening impurities on the internet, to the mind altering pleasures of drug and alcohol abuse, to the inner battles against anger and bitterness?

If you belong to Jesus, you are in the battle. And Jesus has won the victory for you. So claim His victory and abide in Him. When you are tempted, cry out to Him. When you fail, repent. When you have victory, thank Him and give Him the credit.

We will end this morning with a warning and a promise from this same book. Look at I Peter 5:6-11 (read).