

THE BEREAN

"...EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY..." (Acts 17:11)

CLEANSE YOUR HANDS

*A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART FORTY SEVEN OF SIXTY FOUR*

New Testament writers often use very interesting figurative language to make their points clear. An instance is James' statement, "Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye doubleminded" (James 4:8). In the Old Testament, part of the ritual for the priests was to wash in the laver before entering the tabernacle (Exodus 30:17-21). This had to be done to qualify them for service. From this it is easy to apply the expression "cleanse your hands" to the removal of sin. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil" (Isaiah 1:16).

James is writing to Christians but he calls some of them sinners. They are told to cleanse themselves. All disciples know that the blood of Christ cleanses from sin (I John 1:7), but each disciple has something to do in procuring that cleansing. Each one must personally repent and pray to draw nigh to God. It takes humility to admit one's sins and thus James exhorts, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you" (James 4:10).

In this text we are made conscious of our individual responsibility before God. Each child of God must apply himself to cleanse himself "from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (II Corinthians 7:1). It takes effort to do our part. We must resist the devil daily and trust on God's grace. Man has the power of choice. He may choose to live for the devil or he may choose to serve God. We should rejoice that God has left the gate of grace open to us. We must choose each day how to spend our hours and minutes. Once the choice is made, active effort is needed. No one can attain heaven by wishful thinking. A definite choice for God must be made.

It is not only when we have availed ourselves of God's redeeming love that we can lift up holy hands in prayer (I Timothy 2:8). Let us cease making light of our sins and disloyalty to Christ. Let us all cleanse our hands and purify our hearts before God.
(B.G. Echols)

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