

WASH YOUR HANDS AFTER YOU EAT

Jas 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

If you were like me you often would hear your mother say before dinner or lunch, "Now, wash your hands before you eat!" Although I did not like to take the time to do this I knew that it was a good idea to "clean up" before I came to the table. Somehow I took this idea over to my relationship with God too. I believed that God called me to draw near to him and dine but I needed to wash my hands first. It makes sense to do this since surely God is a clean God! In the verse above James uses the picture of cleaning of the hands to represent a change of actions that are of the flesh to actions produced by the Spirit. James also calls upon us to purify our hearts, which he specifies here as the mind. The heart is the inner part of man- spirit and soul. You must look in context in each place you see the word "heart" to see if it is speaking of our spirit or soul. Here James is referring to the soul and in particular the mind. We need to have a single mind towards God.

In the Old Testament under the Law the priests had to wash their hands before they drew near to God. They also had to purify their garments before they approached Him. If they did not then they were not accepted. Priests would have to sacrifice animal's blood and cleanse themselves with water before they could draw near to God. This was to show that man would have to be sinless and perfect to enter into God's presence. He allowed the blood of an animal sacrifice and natural water to represent spiritual realities to come. The Law was but a shadow of what was to come when Jesus Christ would bring in eternal redemption. Jesus came and fulfilled all the commands of God in His life, and then fulfilled all the sacrifices in His death. He took every one of the sins of mankind upon Himself and died as their representative. When Jesus rose from the dead righteousness was given by the Holy Spirit to all who accept Him and believes upon Him. The blood of animals and the natural water represented the blood of Jesus and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Those who accept Christ receive the forgiveness of sins by the grace of God. They become children of God and since they are children the

Father beckons them to come to Him to commune and partake from Him.

At this point, many believers discover a problem. They discover that their actions are not perfect before God. They still commit sins from time to time or even regularly. Before they were saved they loved to sin; but now, they do not love it, but hate it and desire to stop. They know God is beckoning them to draw near to Him, but how can they come before a Holy and Clean God with dirty hands and an impure mind? God calls them to feed on His rhema Word in His presence, but they think they must first wash their hands before they can partake.

God is not like your mother dear Christian. He does not ask you to clean yourself before you come to Him. Many sinners will not come to Christ because they think they must clean up their lives first before they do so. They feel they need to stop sinning before they get saved. This is a problem because a sinner can only produce sins! They need a Savior to be freed from sin. The song sung to unbelievers is "**Come just as you are...**" When a sinner comes to Christ then He is forgiven and cleansed from his sin and receives a new righteous nature that does not want to sin. [Isaiah 1:18- **come and I will cleanse**] However, the believer still has the nature of the flesh in their body and without renewing their mind to who they are in Christ [righteous] and to the resource given to them to live the Christian life [union with Christ by the Spirit], they will continue to struggle with sin. At this point many believers hear this song, "**Come just as you should be...**" Many believers feel that they cannot pray with sins in their life. This is not the case. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray, He told them to start worshipping God. He then told them to pray that God's kingdom and will would be done. Then He told them to pray for their daily food and needs, next He told them to ask forgiveness for sins. **It is interesting that bringing up your sins to God was forth on the list and not first on the list.** [Luke 11:2-4] Many Christians feel they cannot even start praying before they are all 'fessed [confessed] up. God wants us to deal with the sin in our life, but it is not like religion tells us. Religion tells us that we must cleanse our hands and purify our hearts and then draw near to God and He will draw near to us. James reveals the opposite is true. If we will come to God and draw near to Him based

upon the finished work of Christ and upon His grace and mercy and worship Him, then God will draw near to us and the presence of God will reveal the areas that are not right and He will give us the revelation and power to deal with them. God will provide the spiritual water to cleanse our hands [actions]. The more you draw near to God, then the cleaner your hands and heart [mind] will become. As you come before God through His Word, He will impart a revelation of righteousness to you that will empower you to live a God honoring life! God bids you to come eat and then wash your hands! During Jesus' earthly ministry the Pharisees and Sadducees [legalists] had a big problem with Jesus and the His disciples eating without first washing their hands. [Matt. 15:2] This is the same view of legalists today. You must clean up before you partake of God. Jesus knew that outward contaminants could only be cleansed by inward purity and inward purity only comes from God Himself. The heart and then actions can only be made clean by God Himself.

Multitudes of Christians have their faith crippled by guilt and condemnation because of their dirty hands. Multitudes of Christians are struggling to change their wrong actions by their own will power and self reliance because they think they must wash their hands first before they can draw near to God. God still is singing the same old song to you, "**Come just as you are...**" In coming you will find plenty of fresh clean water to wash your hands with and to purify your mind. As coming just as you are, God will reveal to you just as you are- the righteousness of God in Christ, and this will become the water that will cleans your hands and purify your mind. Come, eat, and then wash your hands!