From The Inside, Out

For the outside man to be spiritually clean, the inside man must be changed first. Plainly stated, the heart must be changed. Thus, true cleansing spiritually occurs from the inside, out. David recognized this and asked God to "Create within me a clean heart, O God" (Psalm 51:10). James, recording the steps necessary to overcome pride writes, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts..." (James 4:8). The heart must believe, think, understand and apply differently.

Purifying our hearts and living accordingly requires a conscience effort on our part, meaning that we do or do not do with deliberate and intent hearts. Our lives must be more than just a checklist - more than just a list of dos and don'ts. Example; I must go to church, or I must give of my means. Yes, both are required "dos" for the Christian, but both must be done with proper intent. Paul helps us understand the role of the heart of the Christian regarding giving by saying, "Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7). In other words, I do not give of my means because I have to, or because God does require such, but rather because I desire to. The inside me, my heart, desires to thank and honor God for all that He has done for me.

Jesus explains this principle through the lives of the Pharisees. Their lives, represented by a cup, appeared shiny and clean on the outside. However, inside the cup, their hearts, were completely dirty and unclean because they had abandoned the justice and love of God (Luke 11:39-42). Fastidiously, they attempted to carry out the Law, but their hearts were not properly motivated. Jesus' point is easily understood. No one would desire to drink out of a junk filled, dirty cup on the

inside, no matter how clean it appeared on the outside. Obviously, the liquid one is drinking resides inside the cup. As the Proverb writer plainly declares, "As he thinks in his heart, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7).

Paul writing to the church at Rome, instructing them on how to behave like a Christian says, "Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good" (Romans 12:9). Let us each purpose to follow the instructions given by Paul; knowing that such will cleans us from the inside, out.