

“Clean Hands”  
Acts 18:6  
(Preached at Trinity, August 1, 2007)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. (Read **Verses 1-11**) Paul arrived at Corinth about A.D. 50 during his second missionary journey. Arriving at this city must have been an awesome sight. It was a rough and tough place with almost a quarter million people crowded into a relatively small space.
2. Paul immediately found a Christian couple, Aquila and Pricilla, and joined with them because they shared the skill of tent making. They were to form a close bond – later they would accompany him to Ephesus.
3. Paul's immediate work in every city was to preach the Gospel. He had a burden for souls. It was his chief work.
4. Paul's initial focus was upon the Jews. Because he was forced to do secular labor during the week, his primary labor was restricted to preaching at the synagogue every Sabbath. Weekly he reasoned with the Jews from the Scriptures. Paul had a true burden for his Jewish brethren.  
**Romans 10:1** – “Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”  
**Romans 9:2-3** – “That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. <sup>3</sup> For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh:”
5. When Timothy and Silas arrived from Macedonia they apparently brought financial support with them for Paul was then able to devote himself entirely to preaching.  
NAS **Acts 18:5** – “But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul *began* devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.”
6. Paul earnestly laid the Gospel before them but they would not hear. In fact they responded with blasphemies towards Christ.  
Paul then symbolically shook the dust off his clothes and stated,  
“Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean”
  - A. The Jews would have understood clearly Paul's language  
**Joshua 2:19** – “And it shall be, *that* whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood *shall be* upon his head, and we *will be* guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood *shall be* on our head, if *any* hand be upon him.”  
**Isaiah 59:2-3** – “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid *his* face from you, that he will not hear. <sup>3</sup> For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness.”

- B. Pilate used this symbolism as he condemned Christ to death  
**Matthew 27:24-25** – “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but *that* rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye *to it*. <sup>25</sup> Then answered all the people, and said, His blood *be* on us, and on our children.”
1. It has to do with guilt.
  2. The symbolism is vivid. Picture a man who has just committed murder with a knife. The blood has spattered all over him. He changes his clothes and begins to wash his hands—but the blood will not come off. He scrubs and scrubs yet the blood remains.
  3. Pilate can wash and wash, yet he cannot remove the blood of Christ. In hell the blood stains remain a vivid reminder that he was guilty of shedding innocent blood.
- C. Only the innocent shall enter into glory.  
**Psalm 24:3-5** – “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”
7. Paul is saying that if we warn sinners to repent and receive the Gospel, their blood is upon their own head – they are responsible for their own condemnation. If we do not warn them we bear the responsibility for their condemnation.  
 Listen to the warning from Ezekiel - **Ezekiel 33:2-9**
  8. Tonight I want to focus on **Verse 6**  
 Paul told the Jews that his hands were clean from their blood. He fulfilled his responsibility before them. Their guilt was their own.
  9. Over and over in Scripture we are told that we are responsible for the effect our actions have upon others.  
**Luke 17:1-2** – “Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come: but woe *unto him*, through whom they come! <sup>2</sup> It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”  
**1 Corinthians 8:12-13** – “But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup> Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”
  10. What effect is your life having upon others—both upon the lost and upon other Christians?

- I. Let's look first at the lost – What effect is your life having upon them.  
 John Dick (18 century Scottish pastor & professor) – “The ministers of religion are not alone concerned to be thus pure. Beware lest the objects of your most tender affections, the companions of your social hours, appear before the tribunal of God, and attribute their eternal perdition to the unworthy example which you set before them; to your imprudent indulgence; to your unwise counsels, and unseasonable complaisance; to your total disregard of their spiritual interests.”
- A. What kind of effect are you having upon your children?
1. Parenting demands tremendous energy, total commitment – you have brought an eternal soul into this world.
  2. It demands continual teaching – always in teaching mode  
 Always pointing them to God, the Creator, the Lawgiver, the Provider
    - a. How central is God in your home?
    - b. How much do the activities of your family reflect a high focus upon God? Do they see you pray?
    - c. Too many professing Christians compartmentalize their relationship with Christ – secular vs. religious
    - d. Do you demonstrate to your children that your entire life revolves around Christ? Do they see hypocrisy?
    - e. Do they see that *they* are important in your life?
  3. Are you teaching your boys to become men? That life is serious?  
 That there are duties and responsibilities?  
 Are you challenging them to do difficult things?
  4. What kind of character do you display before them?  
 Do they see integrity, honesty, dependability, loyalty? Are you principled?  
 Do you display love, compassion, and mercy? Do you demonstrate the importance of hard work? Do you demonstrate submission to authority?
  5. What kind of faith do you demonstrate before them?  
 Do you trust God with your life? Do you murmur and complain?
  6. Do you practice consistent discipline showing them that there are consequences to their actions?  
 And do you continually hold the Gospel before them?
  7. Are your hands free from the blood of your own children?  
 How many parents will watch their children lost forever due to their lack of diligence? Will they cry out, “Why didn't you tell me more of Christ?  
 Why did you let me engage in every activity to turn my attention from my soul?”  
 Will their blood be on your hands?
- B. What about other family members  
 Father, Mother, brother, sister, aunts, uncles, grandparents
1. What effect is your life having upon them?
  2. How do they see you at family gatherings?
- C. What kind of effect are you having upon acquaintances?
1. We all have friends or acquaintances who are lost
    - a. It may be a friend from work or school – people you see every day.
    - b. Perhaps someone you see at occasionally at the health club
    - c. It may be the person who does your hair
    - d. It may be a repairman

2. Do you get distracted during social gatherings and spend most of the time engaged in meaningless talk?
- D. What will all these people testify on the Day of Judgment?
1. Will they remember your faithfulness?
    - a. Will they remember that your life was a consistent testimony to the faith you professed?
    - b. Will they remember that as a faithful parent, a faithful friend you always lovingly shared Christ with them?
    - c. Will they cry out, Why didn't I listen? How could I have ignored the gracious testimony of this one who loved me?
  2. Or will they cry out—Children and loved ones, friends and acquaintances, “Why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you care for my soul? Why did we talk about everything but my soul? Why didn't you tell me about Jesus?”
- E. What effect are you having upon those you've never met?
1. Is the gospel a burning flame you cannot extinguish
  2. Are you concerned for lost souls? Kingdom work is work for all.
- II. What effect is your life having upon your brothers and sisters in Christ?
- A. We live in a generation of weak Christianity
1. Doctrine is seen as unessential and something that divides the body of Christ – ours is a day of theological illiteracy
  2. Few are pressing hard after Christ striving to glorify Him in all things
  3. The discipline of discipleship is almost extinct. Few are striving to mortify the flesh, hungering after righteousness.
- B. There are, sadly, pastors who aid in this weakness
1. The pulpit has become weak and ineffectual – gone are the days when Biblical truth thundered from pulpits
  2. Worship has been watered down to appeal to the flesh of carnal men
  3. They make no demands upon believers in fear of being labeled with the charge of legalism.
  4. Christians are weak because they are making them weak  
Their hands are covered with blood – sacrificing the body of Christ to satisfy their own plans.  
The warning is meant to be terrifying  
“It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of these little ones.”
  5. Oh how we need men who labor hard for the souls of their flocks—who tell them what they need to hear. Who preach the Word with all longsuffering and doctrine. We need men who are discharging their duty that their hands might be clean.
- C. Christians are not holding one another accountable
1. Selfishness abounds – people don't truly care for one another. People are too concerned about themselves.
  2. Few want to invest themselves in the lives of others. The words of our Lord ring loud and clear:  
**Matthew 24:11-12** – “And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. <sup>12</sup> And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

3. Where is sacrificial love today?
  4. Few have pure, clean hands.
- D. What affect is your life having upon the brethren?
1. Husbands and wives?
    - a. Husbands, are you giving yourself for the sanctification of your wife? Are you leading her closer to Christ by your example, by your teaching, by your prayers?
    - b. Wives, are you encouraging your husband in his leadership? Are you praying for him? Are you encouraging your children to follow his leadership?
    - c. Are you dragging one another down by your selfishness, your worldly desires
  2. Church members
    - a. Are you praying for one another?
    - b. Are you laboring at building close relationships?
    - c. Are you watching over one another?
    - d. Are you teaching one another?

Conclusion:

1. You are accountable for your actions
2. Pray that love will burn in your bosom. Love for the lost. Love that will drive you to contend for their souls. Love for the brethren that will drive you to sacrifice yourself for their wellbeing.
3. Oh how we need clean hands in our generation.  
**Psalm 24:3-5** – “Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. <sup>5</sup> He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”