

## **Cleaning Day** **Matthew 21:12-17**

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-1-2012

### **Introduction – why the cleaning was needed (Mal. 3:1-7)**

The previous week was National Spring Cleaning Week (the 19<sup>th</sup> through the 25<sup>th</sup>). I didn't even realize they had such a thing till I read it in the newspaper. And the notice got quite a few comments. One woman responded by calling it, "Lay A Guilt Trip Week." She saw no reason for celebration. Another woman responded by quoting Phyllis Diller, who said, "Cleaning your house while your kids are still growing is like shoveling the walk before it stops snowing." Perhaps some of you mothers can relate to her sentiments.

But since we are going to be talking about Spiritual Spring Cleaning today, I thought I would start by reading a list that came out two weeks ago of the top ten signs that your home might need a spring cleaning. I think there are some spiritual parallels. This article starts with the #10 reason and works down to the most important one. The #10 reason was:

10. Someone asks, "What died in here?" and you show them. [I think in the spiritual realm there times when something that used to be alive and vibrant has died in our lives, and it doesn't bother us any more.]
9. Dust on TV screen gives everybody comical Andy Rooney eyebrows. [You can get used to looking at the screen through the dust, can't you? You notice other people's dirty TV screens and computer screens, but you don't tend to notice your own. And I think this is true in the spiritual realm.]
8. When you win the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes, Ed McMahon refuses to get out of the van
7. The so-called "Dust Bunnies" have sharp, snapping teeth
6. Your house gets hit by a twister and it actually looks better
5. Guests take one look at your bathroom and decide to use the backyard
4. When someone from the health department rings your doorbell, you say, "Not again!"
3. Every time you turn on a faucet, you hear a muffled barking sound
2. Even Robert Downey, Jr. refuses to sleep on your floor
1. You've been receiving death threats from Mr. Clean

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Spring cleaning – nobody likes to do it, and yet it is a necessary chore. It's much better that we do weekly cleaning. But on this Palm Sunday I want to examine a text where Christ began to do the work of Spring Cleaning with people who had neglected their cleaning for quite some time.

But first please turn to Malachi 3 for a little background on what is happening in this passage. It is Malachi 3:1-7.

**MAL 3:1 "Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me."** [Matthew has already quoted *this* part of the verse as having been fulfilled in John the Baptist. But verse 1 *also* speaks of a second person who will come, the Lord Jesus] **"And the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts.**" This coming to the temple was not seen as a pleasant time for the priests and Levites in verses 2-3: Verse 2:

**MAL 3:2 "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderer's soap."** I think that's such a cool image of Christ's work of purification – launderer's soap. Verse 3:

**MAL 3:3 "He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness."** Commentators point out that the purging Christ did on Palm Sunday was a precursor of the breaking off of Jewish unbelieving branches and the ingrafting into Israel of believers from the nations. It was a radical purifying of the church so that the new Israel would be true to God. Verse 4 continues.

**MAL 3:4 "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem Will be pleasant to the LORD, As in the days of old, As in former years.**

**MAL 3:5 And I will come near you for judgment; I will be a swift witness against sorcerers, against adulterers, against perjurers, against those who exploit wage earners and widows and orphans, and against those who turn away an alien--because they do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.**

**MAL 3:6 "For I am the LORD, I do not change; therefore you are not consumed, O sons of Jacob.**

**MAL 3:7 Yet from the days of your fathers you have gone away from My ordinances and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will**

**return to you," Says the LORD of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?'**

Today Palm Sunday is being celebrated in numerous churches across this nation who are just as humanistic and just as far from God as Israel was on that first Palm Sunday. And we need to pray that the King of the Church would come and cleanse it and bring another Reformation. Liberalism and false theology is tolerated; gross violations of the laws of God are overlooked; things that used to be strongholds that the church fought against (like abortion and homosexuality) are now considered by some churches in Omaha to be virtues that the church celebrates. In fact, let me list for you the issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church that make me weep and beg God for a Reformation. False Gospels are rampant. The Old Testament Law has been thrown out of the church. Even evangelicals are beginning to question the inerrancy of Scripture. As a result of the weakening confidence in Biblical wisdom, secular versions of psychology have almost completely trumped Biblical counseling, and secular sociology, anthropology, economics, leadership theory, and other departments of wisdom have completely captured the church. This in turn has result in most churches buying into evolution, socialism, feminism, statism, and other worldview perversions. This in turn has led to family disintegration, selfishness, and present-orientedness. And with this irrelevance of the Bible to most of life, it is no wonder that our youth are leaving the churches in record numbers. Why *wouldn't* they join the world? That's where the *church* has gone for wisdom. The Protestant church has all but replaced King Jesus with a pleasant mascot who never bothers anyone and who certainly never drives anyone out of the church. Let's begin at verse 12 and see what the Palm Sunday message was about (at least in part).

## **I. A King Who Casts Out (v. 12)**

**"Then Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves."** One of the tasks of Spring Cleaning is casting out or throwing away things that we don't use. And some of us aren't as good at throwing as others. But postmodernists would tend to think Christ is too harsh to be doing that with *people*. And yet, if you take the Bible seriously, you realize that Jesus is a King who drives people out of the house of God. We call that excommunication. And it is precisely because the church has failed to engage in church discipline that denomination after denomination has become liberal to core. That's the

thesis of Gary North's massive history of the church, called *Crossed Fingers*. When there is no Spring Cleaning year after year, those cute little dust bunnies develop sharp snapping teeth, and it is the Bible believers who come under discipline and are consumed. One of the problems in the church is that the good guys have become so nice that they can't do what Jesus did here. And so they let the wolves occupy the pews until there are more wolves than sheep.

I personally know of many churches in Omaha that have not practiced church discipline in 50 years because of a humanistic desire to please people, which they interpret as love, but which Scripture interprets as hate. According to Hebrews 12, failure to discipline is not loving. It is an evidence of lack of love. On the other hand, I know Reformed churches that are too quick to discipline. They don't have a love that overlooks what Jesus overlooked. But let's dig a little deeper:

#### ***A. Who Owns The Temple?***

Notice who owns the temple. It wasn't Caiaphas the high priest. He may have thought that he owned the temple. He certainly acted like it. But verse 12 says that Jesus "**went into the temple of God.**" God owned it. In verse 13 God called the temple, "**My house.**" Yet how frequently do leaders think of the church as *their* church, and *their* empire that is being built? How many churches are built around the personality of a particular pastor or preacher? It happens all the time, doesn't it? It happens even in Evangelical churches. But church policies will be quite shaped by whether you are doing everything to please God or doing everything to please the pastor. It is *God's* house, and that makes all the difference in the world as to whose policies we are to follow. It's not *our* policies, but *God's* policies. In fact, one old Puritan writer said that the only voice that should be heard speaking in the church is the voice of Jesus speaking through the Scriptures. We call it the regulative principle of government. Everything we do should be done in submission to the owner of the church, God. And so when you have unrepentant homosexuals, new age occultists and Free Masons in membership of churches in Omaha, they are not following God's policies. They are acting as if they are the owners of the church. And a lot of problems are solved if you answer that first question correctly: "Who owns the temple?" It is God.

#### ***B. Who Determines the Ministries of the Temple?***

Point B answers the question: "Who determines the ministries that should go on in the temple?" And the answer is, Jesus. He had not

authorized the so-called ministries that Caiaphas had set up in the temple. In fact, the work Caiaphas was doing had replaced the core essential ministries that God had established. No wonder Jesus drove them out.

### 1. Notice that prayer ministry had been replaced (v. 13)

The first is given in verse 13: “**It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer.’**” Central to the ministry of the temple was prayer, and any ministry that replaces prayer needs to be removed or at least modified. And next to preaching the *most* central ministry in the synagogues was prayer. They were called houses of prayer. What had happened in the temple was that the place of prayer for Jews and Gentiles was so crowded with people selling animals that prayer was pushed out. In fact, this was the only place where the Gentiles were allowed to gather for prayer at the temple. Selling animals was not wrong. For years there had been certified markets outside the temple on the Mount of Olives for buying unblemished animals. But it was not until about 28 A.D. that Caiaphas the High Priest sought to compete with those markets by introducing this one into the temple.

Just for the sake of argument, let’s give Caiaphas the benefit of the doubt. What he did could have been excused as a means of making worship more convenient. You didn’t have to hunt all over town to find an animal that would meet temple standards. And it may not have been a deliberate attempt to exclude Gentiles, because they were evangelistic. On one occasion Christ told the Pharisees, “**You travel land and sea to win one proselyte.**” So they were trying to reach out. They *did* reach out. They were hugely engaged in evangelism. What could be better? It might have even been seen as a means of accommodating Gentiles who had to travel from afar. “Let’s be seeker sensitive.” But Christ’s point was that *even a legitimate ministry of providing animals had displaced prayer from the house of God*. And though we don’t live in the first century with a literal temple, the church of Jesus Christ has done the same thing today and needs the same spring cleaning that was needed back then. Any program, no matter how good it might be, that displaces prayer from the ministry of the church, is fit to be thrown out.

People might think, “What could be more important than x,y,z ministry?” But Caiaphas could have said the same thing. What could be more important than providing clean, spotless animals for the temple? That’s at the heart of the Old Testament Gospel. Without adequate sacrifices, the ministry of the temple would grind to a halt. And Christ basically was

saying, “Figure some other way of fitting that ministry in, but prayer takes precedence.”

How important is prayer to your life? Do you acknowledge Christ’s kingship in this area, or has Christ just become a mascot who never interferes with your priorities and comforts? The statistics in America on prayer are absolutely abominable. The average time that a *pastor* [and I just shake my head at this one – but the average time that a pastor] spends in prayer according to one statistic is 7 minutes a day. It seems that there is a lot of *busyness* that has displaced prayer for pastors. For the average member the statistics are even worse than seven minutes a day. We really don’t have to wait till He gets angry and pulls out the whip. If we periodically clean up our lives, He won’t have to Spring Clean. Prayer is a litmus test for the Christian. In Isaiah 59:16 God says that He marveled that there was no one to intercede. I can’t imagine God marveling over *anything*. I know it is an anthropomorphism. God is not caught by surprise. But the text says that God marveled that there was no intercessor so that we would take it seriously. May He not marvel like that in our church.

## **2. Notice that the temple had enriched itself by getting in bed with the state – a situation that Jesus calls theft (v. 13)**

A second reason Christ cast these men out is given in the last phrase of verse 13: “**you have made it a den of thieves.**” Even though it is a quote from Jeremiah, He was clearly calling these people thieves. Some years ago I gave an extended exposition of what that meant. I’m not going to do it today. I’ll just summarize. In 28 AD Caiaphas got into cahoots with both Rome and the Jewish Zealots to enrich his own pockets. It was a risky business because the Zealots hated Rome and vice versa. But what sweetened the deal was that both Rome and the Zealots got a lot of money on a monthly basis. Here’s what happened.

Up until about 28 AD there had been a total free market in currency exchange and in animals that were brought to the temple. For example, we know that there were four market places on the Mount of Olives that competed with each other in selling temple quality animals, but people were free to bring their own animals as well, so long as they were ritually clean. And so, following the Old Testament provisions, the temple permitted a free market exchange in both money and animals. There was no monopoly. You were free to use Roman money, Tyrian money, Greek money – in fact, you had currencies from all kinds of countries floating around in Jerusalem and being used by the citizens.

By the way, that's the way it used to be in early America, and don't let anyone tell you otherwise. The Spanish silver dollar, or piece of eight, was legal currency until just before the War Between the States. Throughout America you could use currencies from other countries. And the Spanish milled piece of eight was one of the favorites. And by the way, that's why 25¢ pieces are called two-bits. The Spanish piece of eight could be cut up into eight pieces, and two bits was a quarter of a dollar. That all got changed. The Federal Government's current monopoly on money is grossly unconstitutional. Just read the book, *Pieces of Eight*, and you will get a good history. Nowadays our dollars have a note on them that says, "This note is legal tender for all debts, public and private." That means it has to be accepted – even if it becomes worthless. Well that is a form of theft.

And that's what Caiaphas pulled off in about 28 AD – at least within his jurisdiction. He was appointed by Rome as the High Priest of the temple, and it was both a civil and religious office. That was part of the compromise in being licensed by Rome and incorporated by Rome – Rome had a strong say-so in who was in charge. Anyway, Caiaphas came up with a brilliant plan to get rich and gain further power. He mandated that anyone who came into the temple had to use a new temple currency (at his exchange rates, of course), and anybody that came into the temple had to purchase sacrifices from his stores that he had just set up in the temple – around 28 AD, at the beginning of Christ's ministry. And of course, he did it all in the name of efficiency, consistency, convenience, and quality control. He was doing it for the people's good. But it was a government-imposed monopoly that Jesus said constituted theft.

And where the Zealots came in was that they were the ruthless enforcers for Caiaphas. They saw themselves as freedom fighters against Rome, but with the sweet deal that Caiaphas set up they got massive amounts of money for helping to enforce this monopoly on the people. You messed with a Zealot, and you got a sword in your belly. So he paid them handsomely.

And several commentators point out that the Greek words for "den of thieves" is literally "cave of bandits," and was the precise expression used to describe the Zealots in the first century. Did you ever wonder how the Zealots got in control of the temple during the war of 66-70 AD? They were already well entrenched in the temple through this lucrative trade deal with Caiaphas. And so all of this speaks against a thieving Fascist statism.

Is the church today filled with people who ask Caiaphases to do this? Yes it is. The church of today is rife with socialists and statistes of all brands. Just look at candidates that even the evangelicals vote for every four years and you can see it. Notice that Jesus didn't just chase the money exchangers and sellers out of the temple. He chased those who bought from them out of the temple as well. And so the church of today stands in need of a new cleansing. The church is in bed with the state via incorporation, financial subsidies, IRS licensing, government grants to non-profits, church lawyers who are basically G-Men who tell the church what its limits are. So that was the second reason Jesus cleansed the temple.

### 3. Notice that wicked men were harbored (v. 13; Jer. 7:9-11)

The third reason that Christ was angry was that Caiaphas allowed those immoral Zealots to be full members of the church. They were his bodyguards, enforcers, and salesmen. Let me read you the full prophecy that Christ quotes from in verse 13 so that you can see how bad it really was. Jeremiah 7:9-11. This describes the moral character of Caiaphas' enforcers. Jeremiah says, **“Will you steal, murder [and Josephus documents the murders that the Zealots committed], commit adultery, swear falsely, burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom you do not know, and then come and stand before Me in this house which is called by My name, and say, ‘We are delivered to do all these abominations’”?** [That was an early example of the carnal Christian theory – because we are delivered from hell, we can continue to sin. Let us sin that grace may abound. Anyway, he goes on:] **“Has this house, which is called by My name, become a den of thieves in your eyes? Behold, I, even I, have seen it,” says the LORD.**

Whoever these thieves were, the temple tolerated them or perhaps even positively wooed them because of the financial gain. And this gets back to our earlier comments on church discipline. The reason wickedness is tolerated in many evangelical churches is because preaching against it will make the giving go down, or perhaps make a wealthy patron leave. At the time of the Reformation the three marks of the church were the preaching of the Word, the proper administration of the sacraments and the exercise of discipline. By their definition, most evangelical churches have ceased to function as churches. Discipline is virtually non-existent, and when we are unwilling to cast out an unrepentant rebel, Christ must come as King and do His own Spring Cleaning. In other words, He is going to bring judgment. Commentators point out that what Jesus did here was a precursor of his greater cleansing via judgment in 70 AD.

So this is a very relevant passage that would strongly encourage us to promote Reformation in every way that we can. It's very relevant even in terms of our own sins. We need spring cleaning if we are prayerless; we need spring cleaning if we are statist; and we need spring cleaning if we are careless toward one another in holiness.

*C. The Temple Must Never Be Used For Our Own Advancement (vv. 12-13)*

*D. God Continues To Cast Out Through Judgments (vv. 12-13)*

I'm going to skip over points C and D. I think I have hinted at them already.

## II. A King Who Restores (v. 13)

But let's move on to Roman numeral II. Spring Cleaning not only involves us in throwing things away, but also in restoring. When you do Spring Cleaning in your houses, you probably run across all kinds of exciting things that you forgot that you had. And many of those forgotten things get restored into service and use. Decluttering also frees up space, and time for more important things. Well, three things got restored in this chapter: praise, ministry to others and prayer. We'll look at the first two under later points, but let me comment on the restoration of prayer as one of His primary concerns. Verse 13 says, "**My house shall be called a house of prayer.**" On that particular day Christ enabled prayer because, as Mark 11:16 says, "**He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple**" and He stayed there till evening. Finally there was peace and quiet so that the Gentiles could pray. The decluttering enabled spiritual priorities to take place.

But that was merely a symbol of the far greater restoration that would later come through Pentecost. Christ by His Spirit restored prayer to a prayerless church. The following kinds of references to prayer are found in the book of Acts:

Acts 1:14 **These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women.** Acts 2:1: **they were all with one accord in one place** Acts 3:1 - **they went up together at the hour of prayer** Acts 6:4 - **we will give ourselves continually to prayer.** Acts 12:5 - **they prayed... they prayed... but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church..**

Acts is a book that shows prayer fully restored to the church. And it was to such a church that awesome things began to happen. Revival will never happen in America until the prayer is restored to the church. And I would encourage you to join the Women's Intercessory Network, The Men's Prayer Breakfast, Sunday prayers as they occur, or your own prayer groups. There is no reason why you can't start your own prayer groups. And some of you have. But prayer must be present.

### III. A King Who Gathers (v. 14)

A third thing that is needed in Spring Cleaning is gathering stuff and organizing it. If you can't find things, it doesn't do much good to own them. And there were hidden people whom Christ gathered to Himself. Verse 14 says, "**Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them.**" This gathering included both evangelism and mercy ministries. I encourage you to never go anywhere without some tracts in your pocket. You never know what opportunities to witness may come up. And witnessing is a part of the gathering work of the church. Ask God for open eyes to see opportunities to give strategically to the poor, and minister to those who are hurting. We need to be a church that gathers.

### IV. A King Who Divides (v. 15)

#### A. *Between Those Who Praise Him*

Spring Cleaning also requires division between things and discernment. Do I really need this Hawaii shirt? Which keepsakes are clutter and which are essential memories? Of course, that can lead to arguments between husband and wife, one wanting to toss and one wanting to keep. And Christ had disagreement with the scribes on what was important in verse 15: "**But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' they were indignant.**" They weren't too crazy about the wonderful things that Christ did or the singing of the children. They wanted to throw those things out. And in the same way, our vision of what is important can be so skewed that what God thinks is great can be something we have no time or patience for. These priests no doubt thought that their worship was awesome. It was professional, artistically done, and done at precisely the right time. But Christ had no patience for that, and they had no patience for the non-professional praises and the ministries that Jesus loved. Obviously there is a little bit of disagreement on housekeeping here. Apart from the Holy Spirit's

illumination, any of us can have our discernment skewed. And it is good to say with David **“Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”** (Psalm 139:23-24). Ultimately we aren’t the judges of what should be kept and what should be tossed. Christ is.

*B. And Those Who Hate Him*

**V. A King Who Doesn’t Throw Out the Baby With the Bathwater (v. 16)**

Finally, He is a king who doesn’t throw out the baby with the bathwater. Verse 16: **“and said to Him, ‘Do you hear what these are saying?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Yes. Have you never read, “Out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?””** All the scribes could hear was that these kids were being a nuisance. Christ noticed their hearts; He received their praise. But more importantly, His Spirit *perfected* their praise. He said, **“out of the mouths of babes and nursing infants You have *perfected* praise.”** That’s a very interesting word to apply to babies.

When I was a Reformed Baptist, I was taught that we should not allow our children to pray or sing in church because until they made profession of faith, their worship was the worship of an unbeliever – an abomination and unacceptable to God. Even as a Reformed Baptist I kind of thought that was odd, but at least they were consistent. Their theology rejected infants, and it made them throw the baby out with the bathwater. Here’s the point: It is possible to spring clean too much. Even husbands and wives can have disagreements on what needs to be thrown out. And there are disagreements between churches on what needs to be thrown out. I believe that this passage not only endorses family integrated worship, but it endorses the idea that our children are included in the church. In Luke 18:16 Jesus took the little children and the babies into His arms and said, **“For of such is the kingdom of God.”** And here Christ says that the children of believers are enabled by God to have perfected worship – not abominable worship – perfected worship.

Now thankfully, most Christians are inconsistent on this point, and they do teach their children to worship and to bring praise. But they don’t go as far as Christ did, and include them in the kingdom. That’s what circumcision did in the Old Testament and that’s what baptism does in the

New Testament. So I think it hints that children can be members of the church community in the New Testament just like they were in the Old.

But I think it also hints that we should not excuse children from adult worship and have separate worship for the children so that the parents aren't disturbed. I think it speaks to our family-integrated philosophy. You see, the sign of the covenant that was applied to infants did not welcome children into the *families*. They were *already* in the family whether they were circumcised or not. The sign of the covenant welcomed them into the church. And some people think, "Well, if you welcome children as members, then they need to be able to vote or do other things that adults do." No, no. That's egalitarianism. This passage doesn't talk about voting or any other privileges of the church. It's talking about the praises of the children and the presence of the children. Listen to the call of God in Joel 2:15-16: **"Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes."** That's the minimum – they were at least present.

## Conclusion

So we have seen the kinds of things that needed Spring Cleaning back then. But I don't want to let us off the hook on other things. I want to go through the top ten reasons for cleaning a house one more time, and I want each of you to evaluate whether these might be good reasons to engage in *spiritual* house cleaning. First, reason number 10:

10. Someone asks, "What died in here?" and you show them. If any of your original spiritual passions that you had when you became Christian have died and are rotting in the living room, and you've gotten used to the smell – ask God to restore your spiritual sensitivities. Ask Him to renew you in your first love. Revelation 2:5 speaks to this problem when it says, **"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works..."** How do you regain your first love? He says you regain it by repenting and doing the first works. The actions you used to engage in during the time of your first love will stir up the first love once again. So if your spiritual passions have died, ask God to restore them. Top reason #9:

9. Dust on TV screen gives everybody comical Andy Rooney eyebrows. We don't tend to notice the dust on our spiritual computer screen. We can see it on others, but we tend to be oblivious to our own. That's why you shouldn't get offended when people give you Andy Rooney eyebrows over something you say or do. Instead, it is more appropriate to respond, "What?

Is there dust on my screen? Let me clean it.” Now, I am not calling you to be dust inspectors of others. I’m just calling you to be open to seeing the dust on your own screens, and to not get bent out of shape when Andy Rooney raises his eyebrows occasionally at your dust. Reason number 8:

8. When you win the Publishers Clearing House Sweepstakes, Ed McMahon refuses to get out of the van. Are there people that you used to be friends with who won’t step foot in your door? It may be Ed McMahon’s fault (it often is “the other person’s fault”), but at least be open to the idea that you may have contributed to the broken fellowship. Read the *PeaceMakers* by Ken Sande and see if there is anything you can do to restore that fellowship. Ask Jesus to open your own eyes and show you if there is a good reason in you why the McMahon’s of this world are offended with you. And maybe Jesus is going to say, “Hey, I know that other person has problems, but quit being perfectionistic. Have a love that covers over a multitude of sins; that ignores the dirt in their living room.” That may be what he wants you to do – to be less sensitive - not because God is uninterested in their cleaning, but because he wants us to work on our love. Reason number 7:

7. The so-called “Dust Bunnies” have sharp, snapping teeth. Have you become a harsh defender of your turf, ideas, and positions? If so, that’s usually an indicator that there is something indefensible about your positions. When you are right, there is no need to be testy. You can just trust God’s Spirit to open people’s eyes. But if you constantly feel the need to get snappy, bite people’s heads off, get irritated, or in general to be on the attack, it might be a sign that it is time for your own Spring Cleaning. Maybe you do have the dust bunnies that others are pointing out. Another way of saying this is that if every time someone’s dust mop exposes your sin you start biting the mop and exposing how dusty the mop is, you’re not focused on cleaning your own house, are you? Reason number 6:

6. Your house gets hit by a twister and it actually looks better. You know, God sometimes brings disaster into our lives to realign our priorities and to wake us up to what is important in life. On 9-11 there seemed to be a lot of repenting going on. But it didn’t last long. We shouldn’t have to constantly have twisters from the Lord before we clean. Here’s how Psalm 32:9 words it:

**Do not be like the horse or like the mule,  
Which have no understanding,  
Which must be harnessed with bit and bridle,**

**Else they will not come near you.**

Instead He calls us to be quick to respond to God's promptings. We shouldn't need twisters before we clean. We shouldn't need discipline before we clean. Reason number 5:

5. Guests take one look at your bathroom and decide to use the backyard. Bathrooms are places to shower, to wash your hands, and to clean up. If your wife and kids find it easier to reveal their struggles to friends or to the elders than to you, it might be a sign that you're not as accessible as you thought you were. One of the jobs of the dad is to wash his family with the water of the Word, and we need to make sure that their experience of being washed is so gracious and freeing that they want to come back. If we are always curmudgeons when we wash others, people will eventually choose to use the backyard. They won't bother to come to us. Reason #4:

4. When someone from the health department rings your doorbell, you say, "Not again!" We shouldn't need deep cleaning every single day. Peter told Jesus that he wouldn't let Jesus wash his feet. Jesus responded, **"If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."** So Peter overreacted and said, **"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"** Jesus said to him, **"He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you."** In effect, Jesus was saying that we shouldn't need deep cleaning every day. Some people are so morbidly introspective that all they can focus on is their sins. They don't have security in their sonship and in their justification. You don't have to get a spiritual deep cleaning every single day. Quickly wash your feet and get on with life. If you are constantly overwhelmed with sin and caught in deep bondage, then yes, it is time to get counseling and get the broken sewer pipes fixed. But you shouldn't need that every day. God wants you to get from Romans 7 into Romans 8 on most issues. Reason #3:

3. Every time you turn on a faucet, you hear a muffled barking sound. I have no idea what the original author had in mind when he made that comment. But there is a spiritual application. If the demonic seems to be plaguing you constantly and is somehow connected to your sins, you need to get training in dealing with the demonic. And I can give you that training. Jesus gave every believer the authority to tread on demons and to resist them in the name of Christ. Reason #2:

2. Even Robert Downey, Jr. refuses to sleep on your floor. I guess I have no comment on that one, not desiring a lawsuit. Reason #1:

1. You've been receiving death threats from Mr. Clean. I doubt any of you are receiving death threats from Mr. Clean. But if several people have

been pointing out the same sin in your life, don't ignore it. Spring Cleaning is for your own good as much as it is for others. And don't defend people who have been excommunicated and commiserate with them. You're not doing them a favor. Mr. Clean has dealt with them for a reason.

Let me give you one more word that was not in that list. Once you have done your Spring Cleaning, get on with life. Don't be embarrassed every time someone comes into your home and you realize that it's not totally clean. It never will be. Some people get too hyper with cleaning whether physical cleaning or spiritual cleaning. We need to learn to be secure in our sonship and secure in our justification and let people see us as we are. Don't get bent out of shape when litter, crumbs, and cobwebs magically seem to reappear in your spiritual life. "Agghhh! I just cleaned that up and its here again!" Don't think there is something wrong with you. If you are alive and active, there will be stuff that needs to be picked up. You don't need to mourn over the fact that you find sin in your life every day. Join the crowd. It's out of a sense of our security in sonship and justification that sanctification can be a joy. And it's by giving others security in their sonship and justification that we can have a love that overlooks a lot in their lives. Now, we're not going to overlook a rotting corpse in their living room. That's gross. No way. But 1 Peter 4:8 says, "**above all things have fervent love for one another, for *'love will cover a multitude of sins.***" It's our sonship and our justification that enables us to not be petrified that people will visit our unclean homes. It's what gives us joy in sanctification. And so my final admonition to you is to treat your sanctification like you should treat the cleaning of your home. Don't be so perfectionistic that no one is comfortable visiting you and you aren't comfortable in them coming. Be secure in Christ, but make cleaning a regular routine and your sanctification will become joyful and not a burden. Amen.

# Cleaning Day

## Matthew 21:12-17

By Phillip G. Kayser at DCC on 4-1-2012



Introduction – why the cleaning was needed (Mal. 3:1-7)

### I. A King Who Casts Out (v. 12)

A. Who Owns The Temple?

B. Who Determines the Ministries of the Temple?

1. Notice that prayer ministry had been replaced (v. 13)
2. Notice that the temple had enriched itself by getting in bed with the state – a situation that Jesus calls theft (v. 13)
3. Notice that wicked men were harbored (v. 13; Jer. 7:9-11)

C. The Temple Must Never Be Used For Our Own Advancement (vv. 12-13)

D. God Continues To Cast Out Through Judgments (vv. 12-13)

### II. A King Who Restores (v. 13)

### III. A King Who Gathers (v. 14)

### IV. A King Who Divides (v. 15)

### V. A King Who Doesn't Throw Out the Baby With the Bathwater (v. 16)

Conclusion - ten applications

- HOW TO CLEAN THE HOUSE USING YOUR COMPUTER
1. Open a new file in your PC
  2. Name it "Housework."
  3. Send it to the RECYCLE BIN
  4. Empty the RECYCLE BIN
  5. Your PC will ask you, "Are you sure you want to delete housework permanently?"
  6. Answer calmly, "Yes," and press the mouse button firmly....
  7. All done!!!!!!  
Feel better?

