

Sermon for Sunday, August 6, 1978, by Andrew A. Jumper, D.D., Pastor
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GHETTOS IN THE HEART

Philippians 4:1-9

Text: "Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

Philippians 4:8

Modern medical science is in the process of rediscovering something that is very ancient. It is rediscovering that man is one--he is a whole person. It is discovering that while man is physical, he is also a mental/emotional being, and he is a spiritual being. Modern science is discovering that if any one area of man's being is ill, it effects every other part of his being. Personally, I am watching with great interest the tremendous medical complex that Oral Roberts is beginning to build in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In a very real and definitive way, he is trying to combine the best medical, the best psychological, and the best spiritual treatment available for the healing of the whole man. And it is fascinating to see how this concept is so intriguing that some of the best medical men in the country are literally flocking to Tulsa to be a part of this venture.

Back in the pioneer days of medicine, the human body was regarded by science almost exclusively as an object--a thing--to be treated, quite apart from the person who might happen to be living in that body at that moment! Medicine saw its role as the duty to treat and investigate the human body. And while admittedly, great progress was made in many medical areas, for a long time the other elements of the human personality were ignored.

However, beginning about the third quarter of the 19th century, something new was injected into medical science with the advent of men like Freud, Adler, and Jung. Under their leadership the psychological dimension of man was rediscovered and given wide attention. Now, in our day, a third dimension is being added. Under the leadership of doctors like those at the Menninger Clinic and under the leadership of trained spiritual leaders, we are discovering afresh the implications for total health the fact that man is a spiritual being as well as a physical and a mental/emotional being. We are rediscovering that when one part of a man is sick, it effect the other parts of his being. Therefore, if we are adequately to treat the ill, we must deal with all the parts of his personality--with all the parts that comprise his humanness.

As I said, we are rediscovering these things. We are rediscovering them because that has always been the biblical understanding of man. The Bible has always understood that man was one--that he was a whole person and the parts of who and what we were inter-related. In the very beginning, when the Bible in the third chapter of Genesis tells us that God created man and breathed into him the breath of life, the Hebrew literally says that man became a whole personality. For this reason the ministry of Jesus always dealt with the whole man. He dealt with man's emotional/mental life for he healed those who were obviously emotionally disturbed. He dealt with the physical life of man for he healed the sick and fed the hungry. But above all, Jesus dealt with the spiritual needs of man as he told us about the Kingdom of God.

So, if we ignore any one of these three areas of our lives we make a serious mistake. When a man's body gets ill, it affects his emotional and spiritual life. When a person becomes emotionally disturbed, it affects his physical health and his spiritual well-being. But above all, if a man is spiritually ill, it not only affect him morally, it not only affects his relationship to God, it also has impact on his physical health and on his emotional/mental well-being.

Now, the fact is, a lot of us are suffering from spiritual illness. It may not be as immediately obvious as a virus or an infection or some dread disease such as cancer, but in the long run, its consequences can be just as devastating and just as deadly.

For that reason, this morning I want to talk about spiritual problems in our souls and what the Bible says we can do for them. Back in the Old Testament, in the book of Proverbs, the Bible says that as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is. What sort of thoughts are in your soul this morning? Are there some dark spots? Are there some slum areas? Are there some spiritual ghettos? Listen to what Jesus once said about the ghettos in the human heart. He said, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemous: these are the things that defile a man."

So Jesus says that bad and evil and wicked and sick things come out of our hearts, out of our souls. If you have some spiritual slum areas, some ghettos, in your inner being, they defile you. Out of them comes all sorts of spiritual sickness. Do you suppose that is why St. Paul suggested the sort of spiritual urban renewal program in the passage that is our text for this morning? He writes, "Whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things." Yes, says, St. Paul, substitute the good for the bad in the thoughts of your hearts, for as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is.

So, there is a spiritual principle of sowing and reaping. The Bible says that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. If you are sowing spiritual trash, spiritual filth and pollution in your hearts, you are going to reap a sad harvest for Jesus says, "out of the heart proceeds evil." See how it works! When I was a pastor in West Texas, people from the surrounding communities would come in to ask for spiritual guidance and counsel. Once two couples came in together from a little near by community. Their problems started when they began to go to "X" rated movies. From that they went to reading certain types of books and literature that is available. From that they began to watch home movies that are available for a fee. Finally, with all of this ghetto filth brewing in their souls, they moved to wife swapping. But living in the spiritual slums did not work very well. By the time they came to me they were suffering physically, they were in terrible emotional confusion, and spiritually they were desperately lost. Two marriages had been wrecked and five little children had been terribly affected. They had created spiritual slums, dreadful ghettos, in their hearts and now they were reaping a bitter harvest.

Let me ask you quite frankly this morning, what sort of things are you putting in your hearts? What sort of books are you reading? What sort of movies do you attend? What type of TV programs do you watch? What kind of thoughts do you let your heart dwell on? Are there some ghettos in your soul this morning, some slum areas, some dark and dreadful places? You see, what you sow in your heart, you will reap in your life.

But St. Paul tells us to think about things that are worthy of praise. So, let me ask you about that. How much are you reading your Bible, filling your heart with the thoughts of God, building more stately mansions in the soul? Are you memorizing scripture passages, reading religious books, filling your heart with the things of God? What you sow is what you reap.

And what about your children? Are you sowing spiritual things in their little hearts? Are you telling them about God and Jesus? Are they getting religious training, are you bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Do you remember what you promised when you presented them for baptism? You were asked, "do you promise to teach them the doctrines of our holy religion and to set before them a godly example." Are you doing that? What kind of spiritual harvest can you expect in the lives of your children?

And what about your marriage? Have you and your spouse ever sat down together to analyze the spiritual quality of your life together? What sort of spiritual things are the two of you putting into your relationship? Do you have a spiritual game plan for your marriage that will help you to move to deeper and more mature levels in your relationship together with God? There is so much sickness, so many slum areas, so many ghettos in marriages today. And do you know why? It is because couples are letting the wrong things take possession of their hearts; they are letting the wrong feelings and thoughts control their souls and they are reaping the dreadful harvest of sin.

You know, there are many manipulators who are trying to make us buy this or buy that, or be this or be that. And in an admittedly materialistic world, if you and I are not planting spiritual seed we will be at the mercy of godless forces. You see, psychologists tells us that when the conscious mind and the unconscious mind are in conflict, the unconscious mind--in the end--always wins out. If, with my conscious mind, I know what is good and true and just and honorable and pure and tell myself to do those things, yet in my soul I have created slum areas, dreadful ghettos, it is the ghettos that will ultimately control my life. If you and I pour trash and filth and pollution into our inner being, that is what will finally determine who and what we become. As the Bible says, as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is.

So, St. Paul tells us to think about things worthy of praise. And do you know what he tells us will happen when we do that? He says, "the peace of God which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." Would you like that? Would you like to have peace and Jesus in your heart?"

Let me tell you a story about Leonardo de Vinci. When he was painting his famous masterpiece entitled "The Last Supper," he had trouble finding a model for the face of Jesus. At last, however, he found a young man from a fine Christian home with the inner spiritual qualities that showed in his face and he was chosen for the model for Jesus. Time went by as de Vinci worked on his painting. Several years later he came to paint the face of Judas. He went to the local prison to find the right face to portray the sense of betrayal and viciousness he needed for Judas. By a strange coincidence, the man he chose was the same man who had once posed for the face of Jesus. That young man with so much spiritual promise had let slum areas, ghettos, flourish in his soul. He took his eyes off of Jesus. When the things of God were no longer in his heart, he no longer had Jesus there. Now, those seeds of evil he planted has born their harvest and the consequence showed in his very face. The sin in his life had so eaten into his character that the evilness in his heart showed.

There is another interesting thing about de Vinci's painting. The next time you get a chance to look at a copy of the painting, look at the right hand of Jesus. You will see it resting on the top of the table and it appears to be cupped to hold something, only the hand is empty. Originally the hand held the chalice of the last supper. However, when the painting was finished, a friend of the painter was invited to see it. His attention was focused on the chalice and he seemed oblivious to all else. De Vinci, with one stroke of the brush, boldly wiped out the cup. His friend turned to him in astonishment, but de Vinci said to him, "No, man, look at the master's face--look at the face!"

