

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance.”* (James 1:2)

After a relatively tough winter coupled with the ups and downs of a tumultuous early spring, the reality of the season is finally upon us. Spring has finally sprung, the birds are back, trees and flowers are in full bloom and the grass is starting to green up nicely. In keeping with the spirit of “*seasonal*” renewal, let’s not forget that it’s also the perfect time to do a little sprucing up around the house. Gradually, over a period of time, our homes will inevitably become cluttered with “*stuff*.” Sure, some of it’s good stuff but be honest with yourself Christian, most of it’s just junk that really needs to go! Over time the closets all seem to have spawned dusty old shoes and ill-fitting clothes, the garage is packed to the rafters, that shed out back is overflowing with who knows what and every drawer in the house seems to have a set of keys to locks that no longer exist. Christian, it’s a near certainty that at some point in time you will have to face the unenviable task of ridding yourself of all the “*stuff*” that’s been piling up on you. As a general rule, that’s never an easy thing to do and rarely will you find it to be a pleasant undertaking, especially if you’ve been accumulating all of that “*stuff*” for a while. But, as unpleasant as it may be, it all has to go or you’ll eventually find yourself floundering in an endless sea of “*stuff*.”

Over time the home of even the most fervent clean-freak will accumulate some “*physical junk*.” Likewise, there are times when it seems that everything our lives touch generates a surplus of “*spiritual junk*” as well. The relationship with a friend, your spouse or a family member can become strained by unresolved disputes. You or a loved one may become involved with drugs or alcohol, your kids may have become disobedient and rebellious or a disagreement with your boss may be causing you problems on the job. The truth is, we live in a chaotic, sinful world where even the most devout Christian can be overwhelmed by “*spiritual junk*.” Junk that, if not dealt with properly, will continue to weigh on you until you’re physically, spiritually and emotionally drained. Well, this is the reality of the situation Christian; you’re a human being and without Jesus in your life, there’s not a whole lot that you can do about any of it. Nevertheless, if you don’t get rid of it, over time you will become increasingly more pessimistic about ever being able to resolve your worldly misfortunes. From there, things can very quickly spiral out of control until eventually, all of that “*spiritual junk*” will choke out your relationship with God, with other Christians and the peace and contentment that comes from living a Christian lifestyle. *“Do not let my heart be drawn to what is evil so that I take part in wicked deeds along with those who are evildoers;”* (Psalm 141:4)

*“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground...”* (Ephesians 6:13) We all know that Satan is a very powerful enemy but what we sometimes fail to appreciate is that he’s also a very patient enemy. He truly believes that he’s eventually going to own your soul so he’s in no particular hurry to claim it! As he gradually creeps into your life so too does the accumulation of “*spiritual debris*” that he brings with him. Remember that Christian because if you fail to keep a close watch over your spiritual life, when he does come calling (and he will), he’ll slowly but surely bring you around to his ways. Your attendance at worship, church activities and your prayer and Bible study will become less and less frequent. Likewise, the time spent with your fellow Christians will diminish and steering clear of sinful situations will no longer seem as important to you as they once did. As stressful as a confrontation with the Devil may be, remember this; your “*spiritual*

*spring cleaning*” can only be successful if you devote yourself to total obedience and commitment to Christ Jesus. But be prepared Christian, facing down Satan and the spiritual demons that he can unleash on you certainly won’t be easy and... if you think that you can face him without Christ in your life, you’re destined to fail. If you’re truly seeking the peace and contentment of a life in Christ and if you want your relationship with God and your fellow Christians to grow you’ll need strength and guidance from the Holy Spirit, a lot of prayer and a large dose of some good old fashioned spiritual cleansing.

In Matthew’s Gospel (16:23) he quotes Jesus as saying to Peter, “*Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.*” (Matthew 16:23) Christian, if you’re not allowing God to show you your sin, if you can’t muster up the faith and courage to confess it all to Him honestly and sincerely, if your focus is on “*human concerns*” rather than “*the concerns of God,*” that “*spiritual junk*” will overwhelm you so gradually that you won’t even realize that it’s happening. Likewise, Jesus didn’t overburden His apostles with His teachings. He taught them as much as they could handle when He was with them and then, after ascending into Heaven, He sent the Holy Spirit to reveal even more to them. Like the Apostles, we too are human beings who, when it comes to seeing our own disposition and behavior in a positive light, tend to substitute reality with self-deception so He reveals our iniquity and our need for repentance gradually but... only as much as we can deal with at that point in time. The good news is that through the power of the Holy Spirit you can see yourself as God sees you and if you rely on His strength and divine guidance, you can rid yourself of the “*spiritual debris*” that Satan has thrust upon you.

Face it Christian, in order to remove all of the “*spiritual junk*” that’s been keeping you from being blessed with a lasting relationship with Christ, you’ll need a good “*spiritual*” spring cleaning. Remember, God won’t just show you all of the “*stuff*” that you’ll need to either eliminate or change in your life and then leave it up to you to clean it up alone. No sir! He will not only show you what needs to be done, through the power of His Holy Spirit, He’ll provide you with everything you’ll ever need to implement those changes as well.

*“...may He work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* – Hebrews 13:20-21

Your Servants in Christ Jesus,

Carl Howard, Brian Abney and Rod Perks