**Sacred Cows**

**Part 4 of 6**

**“Rotten to The Core?”**

**Ezekiel 36:25-27**

When you hear the title *Sacred Cows*, your first question may be, ‘*What makes me think I’m qualified to make the judgment on what constitutes a sacred cow?’* My main qualification is that I taught all of these traditions myself – before I began to experience a radical paradigm shift as I began to learn more and more about the meaning of grace. After 20 years of full-time ministry, I’ve come to know with certainty that I’m not alone in having taught the traditions addressed in this series.

The sacred cows I address in this series are traditions I taught as a pastor at a time when I was passionate about the truth. I believe that the overwhelming majority of pastors are sincere believers who love God, the Scriptures, and the church. I’ve often said of myself that my heart was in the right place. It was my head that was wrong. I think that many people are in that same condition.

Frankly, I’ve been so wrong about so much for so long that I don’t have any rocks in my pocket to throw at anybody. On the other hand, my concern and love for the church causes me to teach plainly and clearly.

Every week in this series, I intend to make a “shake ‘em up to wake ‘em up” statement. I’m calling a sacred cow out to make the point that there’s been a widespread – though admittedly unintentional – dilution of the truth. I was taught as a child that a half-truth is a whole lie. I think that applies here. When it comes to the gospel, diluted truth is polluted truth, and polluted truth is no gospel at all.

Some people will say that I’m making a big deal over nothing, arguing that my observations are nothing more than a matter of semantics. My response is that it’s “only semantics” to those who don’t see a difference between what I’m saying and the way it’s commonly said. Words do mean something, and when ideas are put into words in such a way that they lead to or reinforce erroneous notions, it’s appropriate to challenge the use of those words. Too much is at stake to risk faulty communication about the truth. *John 8:32 says it’s the truth you know* that makes you free.

So, on that note, another one of the most dangerous sacred cows in the body of Christ today is the belief that our hearts are desperately wicked*.*

For many years, as a Christian, I believed that at the core of my being, I was still a wicked person. I knew I’d been forgiven, but still saw inclinations toward sinful thoughts, attitudes, and even actions. Growing up in the church, I regularly heard that – although we’re forgiven – our hearts are still wicked and untrustworthy.

The Good News is that – as believers – our hearts aren’t wicked now. If we believe the lie that they are, we’ll find ourselves acting out of that wrong belief. We’ll act in a way that ultimately will fulfill what we believe. That’s a basic principle of the human psyche. Proverbs 23:7 says it this way, ***“For as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.”***

I’ve often heard well-meaning preachers say (and, sadly, I’ve been one of those well-meaning preachers) that we all are wicked to the core. They speak of human depravity as though Christ’s cross has meant nothing in our lives. But Jesus is a greater Savior than many of us have even imagined. What He’s done has brought about a change within us, and it’s surprising to many people when they come to discover the truth about the matter.

***Consider three New Covenant truths regarding the heart that will put this sacred cow down:***

***1. God Has Done Something NEW About Your Heart Problem.***

Jeremiah 17:9 ***“****The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”*

2 Timothy 2:15 “*rightly divide the word of truth*”

Isaiah 43:19 and 25, ***“****I am doing a NEW thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions, for My own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*

***2. God Has Exchanged His Heart for Yours.***

Ezekiel 36:25-27 says, ***“****I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances.”*

1 Corinthians 6:17, *“But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him.”*

2 Peter 1:4, *“By these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”*

***3. God Has Made You Righteous by Giving You Christ’s Righteous Heart.***

2 Corinthians 5:17 says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”*

2 Corinthians 5:21 says, *“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”*

1 John 4:17 says, *“As He is right now, so are you in this world!”*

2 Corinthians 3:18 says *“As you behold the glory of the Lord, the Holy Spirit in you goes to work, transforming you into the very same image from glory to glory.”*