TITLE: A Clean Slate

TEXT: Acts 3:19; Ro. 3:22-23; Ezek. 18:30-32; Ps. 116:15; Acts 2:38-39; Ro. 10:9-10

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about having a clean slate.

The dictionary defines the term clean slate as:

 A record of past performance or activity: *starting with a clean slate.*

 How many of you remember the old TV show “The Millionaire”? This was a television show that I think aired in the late 50”s or early 60’s. Back when a million dollars was a tremendous amount of money. Back before anyone was a billionaire.

 Anyway, the show was about a Millionaire who would pick people at random and give them a million dollars. He would do it with total anonymity.

 In one show of the Millionaire that I remember there was a couple that was really struggling financially. They were in debt clear up to their eyebrows. They had a sick child and they were so destitute that they couldn’t afford to get him a needed operation that would save his life…

 The show revolved around their despair as parents just having to struggle with life and watch hopelessly as their son grew sicker and sicker unable to do anything about it because of the financial destitute situation they were in…

 Bill collectors seemed to always be calling asking for money that they didn’t have…. Then one day the calls all stopped. The mom went to a local grocery store to pay a little on a bill they owed there and found that the bill was paid in full. As she went with the meager amount of money she had to other creditors she found that they had been paid in full as well. She goes to her bank expecting to find an empty account and finds that a million dollars had been deposited into it!

 The family’s slate had been wiped clean! And they now had an overabundance of blessing.

 Their son could have his life saving operation.

 You never saw his face but the show would end with the millionaire sitting in his limo watching…..

 Watching the complete joy of those who had their slates wiped clean and now could live a new life of hope….

Most of us can probably identify with this family and their financial struggles and imagine what it would be like to have our financial slates just wiped clean by an unidentified benefactor.

 Can you imagine what it would be like to have someone pay off all of your debt and put a deposit of a million dollars in your bank account? How it would make you feel?

 Do you think that something like this could never happen to you?

 What if I told you that something like this has happened to many of us here today. And that it is possible for all of us here today.

 To have our slates literally wiped clean, our debts paid in full, and enjoy the blessing that only living a life free from debt can bring…

 Do you realize that there is a debt that is far more oppressive and potentially devastating to us than any financial debt that we may ever incur?

 And that is the debt of sin! The debt we incur for sinning against an all holy, all righteous God. A debt that we, ourselves, cannot ever pay and one that will ultimately destroy us if it goes unpaid!

 The good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is that one has come to pay off your and my debt! To pay off our debt to God! The debt of our sin! And He came to pay it off in full so that we can enjoy the fullness of life. So that we can live our life debt free in the kingdom of God.

 **Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord…**

**Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out!**

Just what does it mean to have our sins wiped out?

The phrase wiped out comes from the Greek =

**1813 exaleipho {ex-al-i'-fo}**

**1) to anoint or wash in every part**

**2) to wipe off, wipe away**

**2a) to obliterate, erase, wipe out, blot out**

We all have the hope and promise here of having our slates wiped clean with God!

 Of having the debt of our sin paid in full! Wiped out! Erased! Obliterated so that we may enjoy times of refreshing and blessing from the Lord!

 As much as it may excite us to think of someone paying off all of our financial debt, how much more should it excite us to think that someone might pay off our debt of sin? That we can escape the just judgment of our sin, an eternity of separation from God in Hell, where as we talked about last week, is a place where the worm doesn’t die and the fire is not quenched, and be given the hope and joy of heaven!

 Of one day going and moving into a heavenly mansion in the city of God to be with Him forever!

 That is the offer that God is making to us here.

**Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord!**

 What a promise! To have our sins wiped out! Our slates literally cleaned of sin! Our debt of sin paid and paid in full so that we can enjoy times of refreshing from the Lord.

 The word used for refreshing here is:

**403 anapsuxis {an-aps'-ook-sis}**

1. **a cooling, refreshing**

This promise was originally spoken to the people of the Middle East. Many of them lived in the dessert.

 How many of you have been outside working on a hot and still day and you were just miserable in the heat and then, all of a sudden, a gentile cool breeze comes up and hits you in the face? Feels great doesn’t it?

 Like a time of refreshing sent by the Lord.

 Once our sins have been wiped out God promises us that He will send us refreshing times.

 The most refreshing of those times is in just knowing that our slates have been wiped clean, that we have been forgiven, and that which has stood between us and God, our sin, has been wiped out! We now can receive the refreshing wind of the Holy Spirit of God in our life! We become Heaven bound!

 When our time comes Scripture says that the Lord has a mansion in Heaven prepared for us to move into!

 What a promise we have here!

 But like all the promises of Scripture this is a conditional promise.

 The promise is having our sins wiped out so that times of refreshing may come from the Lord…

The condition to receive the promise…

**Repent, then, and turn to God!**

In order for our slates to be wiped clean with God, our sins to be wiped out, there is something that we must do… Repent and turn to God.

 The implication of this verse of Scripture is that if we don’t repent, don’t turn to God then our sins will not be wiped out.

 In order to claim the promise of having our sins wiped out we need to first repent of our sin and turn our lives to God.

 So what does it really mean to repent?

**3340 metanoeo {met-an-o-eh'-o}**

**1) to change one's mind,**

**2) to change one's mind for better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins.**

In other words, if we are to repent of sin then we must change our mind about it.

 To see the sins of ones past with abhorrence.

 In essence, we need to come to see sin the same way that God does or to come into agreement with God about our sin..

 If we really come into agreement with God about our sin then our only response to sin will be to turn from it.

To repent of it.

 A ran across a good story that tells about true repentance…

Charles Edward White shares---

 *“When Michigan played Wisconsin in basketball early in the season in 1989, Michigan's Rumeal Robinson stepped to the foul line for two shots late in the fourth quarter. His team trailed by one point, so Rumeal could regain the lead for Michigan. He missed both shots, allowing Wisconsin to upset the favored Michigan team.*

 *Rumeal felt awful about costing his team the game, but his sorrow didn't stop at the emotional level. After each practice for the rest of the season, Rumeal shot one hundred extra foul shots. Thus, Rumeal was ready when he stepped to the foul line to shoot two shots with three seconds left in overtime in the national-championship game later that same year.*

 *Swish went the first shot, and swish went the second. Those shots won Michigan the national championship. Rumeal's repentance had been genuine, and sorrow motivated him to work so that he would never make that mistake again.*

 Or As Paul wrote in….

**2Cor 7:10 (NIV) Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.**

 Repentance came first—then sin was wiped out and times of refreshing came.

 It was Rumeal Robinson’s genuine sorrow for his shortcomings, his sin, if you will, that motivated him not to repeat the mistakes of his past, but to work to do whatever was necessary to overcome his mistakes so that he wouldn’t repeat them.

 Just feeling sorry for our sin is not enough. Our sorrow for sin needs to be followed by action.

 The action of turning from it and of vowing that it will never happen again, and then doing what is necessary to make sure that it doesn’t.

 All of us have missed the mark in this life from time to time. All of us have come up to the line and choked when the stakes were high….

 One thing that we all have in common here this morning is that we are all sinners!

**Roma 3:22 (NIV) This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,**

**23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God!**

We all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God!

 Do you know what it means to have fallen short of the Glory of God? It means to fall short, to come up lacking when it comes to seeing God in all His glory.

 Our sin will keep us from entering into the presence of God. If we sin we will fall short, come up lacking when it comes to seeing God and being able to be in His glorious presence..

 All have sinned so all fall short!

 But God has provided a way for us to enter into His Glory, to one day literally be able to stand in His presence!

 He has provided us the way through Jesus Christ and repentance.

 **Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord!**

 The prophet Ezekiel talked about our need for repentance so that our sins could be wiped out…

**Ezek 18:30 (NIV) "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent!**

 **Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.**

**31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?**

**32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!**

Folk’s, sin destroys! Sin kills!

 Scripture tells us that the wages of sin is death!

 The wages, the end result of sin is death!

 And this is not just speaking of physical death; it is speaking of spiritual death, eternal death!

 So God says to us…

**Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall.**

**31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die?**

**32 For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!**

This last portion of this verse comes to us in the form of a pleading from the Lord!

 When He says “repent and live” He is pleading with us to do so. Why would you choose to die when I have provided a way for you to live?

 Why would you choose to die in your sin when I have provided a way for your sins to be wiped out, washed away, obliterated so that you can have times of refreshing?

 **I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD.**

 This statement makes it clear that the Lord is not talking about physical death here but that He is solely talking about spiritual, eternal death.

 How do we know that?

Because …

**Psal 116:15 (NIV) Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.**

 When a saint, a believer who has had their sins wiped out through repentance and the blood of Christ dies, their death is precious in the sight of the Lord because their death in the body is the gateway for them to enter into eternal life with God!

 The death being referred to in Ezekiel is the death of the non-believer, the death of the one who has not had their sins wiped out! That death is eternal death! Being eternally separated from God in Hell!

God takes no pleasure in that!

In speaking about this kind of death God says…

 **I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!**

The Lord God says…

**31 Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit.**

There is only one way to rid ourselves of all the offenses that we have committed.

 And that is to repent of them so that they can be wiped out. Wiped out through the forgiveness of God.

 Our forgiveness is only found in and through Jesus Christ and the only way that we can get to Jesus is through repentance.

**Acts 2:38 (NIV) Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

**39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call."**

Forgiveness for sin only comes one way and that is to be baptized (immersed) in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sin.

 We are baptized in Christ when we ask Him to come into our heart and become the Lord and Savior of our life.

 That is when we immerse ourselves in Him!.

 Water baptism is symbolic of that event. Water baptism is an outward expression of this baptism that has already transpired inwardly! The seal of our spiritual baptism in Christ is the Holy Spirit of God coming into our hearts!

**“Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

The Holy Spirit is Gods seal upon our life, the seal that says we are a child of God.

 But before baptism there must come repentance!

 Scripture says…

**"Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.**

 Repentance is as necessary to our salvation as Jesus is necessary to our Salvation!

 For it is only in our repentance that we come into agreement with God about our sin.

 **Roma 10:9 (NIV) That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.**

**10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.**

 Do you understand that we can’t really confess Jesus as Lord without coming to repentance first?

Greek word for confess:

**3670 homologeo {hom-ol-og-eh'-o}**

**1) to say the same thing as another, i.e. to come into agreement with..**

**2b3) to confess, i.e. to admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused of..**

In order to confess Jesus as Lord we need to come into agreement with God!

 One of the things that we need to come into agreement with God about is sin! Our sin! To see our sin as God does!

 And if we see our sin as God does, come into agreement with Him about it, there can only be one possible response on our part and that is to repent of it! Do a 190! Turn away from it!

It seems a lot of the times when it comes to repentance of sin instead of doing a 190 we do a 360!

 A 360 is going all the way around and coming back to where we started. A 190 is to go in an opposite direction.

 The message of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ to prepare the way for Him was what?

 Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!

 Before Jesus there must come repentance. A willingness to turn away from and forsake our sin.

 How about you this morning?

 Have you come to God with a repentant heart?

 Or have you, like many, tried to put the cart before the horse and come to God and then expect Him at some time down the road to make you repentant?

-- A.W. Tozer

God will take nine steps toward us, but he will not take the tenth. He will incline us to repent, but He cannot do our repenting for us.

Repentance is something that we must do entirely on our own.

 We need to come to God with a repentant heart, a heart that is truly sorrowful for sinning against Him…Sorrowing to the point that we are willing to and want to turn away from our sin….

 When we approach God in this way then He will give us the ability to do that which our heart has already decided to do.

 He will give us the ability that we didn’t have before, and that is to go and sin no more as we simply yield our will to the will of Him who now lives inside of us.

 In ministering at the Jail one thing that you learn very quickly is that everyone there is innocent. Most will inform you of that right away.

 I talked with an inmate a few years ago who claimed to be a Christian, said that he had accepted Jesus as his savior many years ago, but that he still struggled daily with sin. He had done some terrible things.

 He had the same fatal flaw in his theology that many have, and that is that it is enough to accept Jesus as your savior and that you don’t have to make him your lord….

 When the fact is Jesus can only become our savior after we make Him our Lord, after we give Him Lordship, give Him control of our life.

 To make Christ Lord will demand that we first come to him with a repentant heart, a heart that is truly sorrowful for our sin and because of that sorrow we are willing to turn away from it.

 King Frederick II, an eighteenth-century King of Prussia, was visiting a prison in Berlin, the inmates tried to prove to him how they had been unjustly imprisoned. All except one.

 That one sat quietly in a corner, while all the rest protested their innocence. Seeing him sitting there oblivious to the commotion, the king asked him what he was there for. "Armed robbery, Your Honor", the man replied.

 The king asked, "Were you guilty?" "Yes, Sir," he answered. "I entirely deserve my punishment.

“The king then gave an order to the guard: "Release this guilty man. I don't want him corrupting all these innocent people."

 Only one man in the entire prison had a repentant heart so only one man was qualified to be set free!

 The same is true with all of us…It is only as we have a heart that is truly repentant before God that we will ever be set free from sins grasp on our life…

 Only as we repent and turn to God will our sins be wiped out, our slate cleaned and we will enjoy times of refreshing from the Lord.

 Are you enjoying those refreshing times from the Lord this morning? Have your sins been wiped out, your slate cleaned before God?

 If you can’t mater of factly say yes, then let me challenge you with these final questions this morning…

 Have you come to God with a repentant heart?

 Have you come into agreement with Him about sin? Your sin?

 Have you come to see your sin as God does? Something that will destroy your life and keep you from one day entering His glory, keep you from times of refreshing from the Lord?

 Has your slate been cleaned? Your sin been wiped out?

**Acts 3:19 (NIV) Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord!**