

Thought for Wednesday March 18, 2009

The calendar tells me that spring is just two days away. I'm sitting in the office this morning looking out at the dwindling piles of snow in the parking lot, some of the shrubs, plants, etc. are starting to be noticeable stretching themselves it appears heavenward in an attempt to break free from winters long, cold grip (*and man has it been long*).

Maybe it's just me, but doesn't it seem that as spring approaches we seem to develop a sense of urgency to make everything in our house and outside the house clean and in order. And as I've survived my first winter in Saratoga Springs (which reminded me more of a Buffalo winter – I'm thinking I was somehow misled in the interview process concerning winters here... I digress) like you, I'm itching to breathe life into and acquire that freshness that seems to accompany the first signs of spring each year it arrives. Yes, you could say I've got "*cabin fever*" and it's starting to make me feel a little crazy at times – Know what I mean?

Even though we moved in to our new home in January, we are beginning the spring-time tradition of "spring cleaning." I'll bet that some of you are in the process of turning your homes upside down as you clean out closets, take things apart, clean and scour. You're reaching into every dark corner of your homes in order to make it presentable, fresh, and new. And that reminds me, sometimes we need to do the same thing with our spiritual houses. We need to take stock and clean up and give them a good strong scrubbing. All of us grow stale sometimes and need a spiritual "*freshening up*." As Christ-followers, we recognize *Who* is living in our spiritual houses, "*...don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you...*" (1 Corinthians 6:19, NLT)

Things always get tucked back in the corners of our spiritual closets that aren't needed. We accumulate grime and dirt on our spiritual floors and walls. From time to time we need to turn our spiritual homes upside down and clean them inside and out in order to present our bodies "*a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God*." (Romans 12:1)

What needs done in order to clean up our spiritual homes? Only you

know the areas that need worked on in your own individual life. What needs to be improved? Evaluate everything you do and say and think. Is it pleasing to the Lord? *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”* (Colossians. 3:17)

Are there things in your life that are just junk and cluttering up your life? Are there things getting in your way of serving Christ to your greatest potential? Are things like worry, anger, gossip, and bad habits cluttering up your life? If it's something you ought to keep in your life it will pass the guidelines of Scripture: *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.”* (Philippians 4:8)

When you clean your house you gather together your cleaning tools, such as scrub brushes, mops, and brooms. All you need to clean your spiritual house is one thing – the Word of God: *“For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”* (Hebrews 4:12)

Cleaning our homes usually takes all kinds of cleaners: window cleaners, , floor cleaners, bleach, and disinfectants. When it comes to cleaning our spiritual house, we need the one all-purpose cleaning agent – God’s forgiveness. It’s guaranteed to clean all grime and dirt, which embodies itself as sin buildup: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

I’m a *“list-guy,”* that is, I like making lists of things that I need to do, when to do them – It’s a weird quirk, I’ll admit, but I find satisfaction in being about cross-off another item on my list. Well, what if we got together all those cleaning supplies together to clean our house, even made a list of what work needed done, but did nothing else? It wouldn’t do us any good, it wouldn’t help! We’ve got to use the supplies and actually do the work! Guess what, the same is true of our spiritual homes. God gives us His Word and His forgiveness but we have to use them to keep our lives clean! *“I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against*

you.” (Psalm 119:11)

Usually when we finish cleaning our own homes, we look around and say that we'll never let the clutter pile up that high again and we determine not to let it. We should do the same for our spiritual house. Determine not to let it get dirty again. The only way to accomplish this is to keep it up daily by feasting on God's Word and being sensitive to the Holy Spirit to work in our lives: *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”* (Galatians 5:16)

My hope and desire is to see temperatures continue to rise, buds appearing on the trees, flowers beginning to make their way up and out of the ground and you and I to get caught up on our spring cleaning!

Be Strong, Be Courageous, Be Fearless – and remember...

Christ **IS** All!
Pastor Mark