

# Proverbs 20:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

## Analysis

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This rhetorical question expects the answer: no one. No person can claim complete heart purity or sinlessness. This verse confronts human self-righteousness by asserting universal depravity. Even the most outwardly moral person harbors sinful thoughts, desires, and motives. The Hebrew 'zakah' (clean/pure) and 'taher' (pure from sin) demand absolute moral perfection that only God possesses. This proverb anticipates Paul's teaching that 'all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23). It demolishes every claim to self-justification and drives us to seek righteousness outside ourselves—ultimately found only in Christ's imputed righteousness. Only through Christ's perfect obedience and atoning death can sinners stand clean before God.

## Historical Context

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Despite Israel's covenant status and possession of the law, Scripture repeatedly emphasized their inability to achieve the righteousness God required. This pointed forward to the need for a Savior.

## Related Passages

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**Hebrews 11:1** — Definition of faith

**Romans 1:17** — The righteous shall live by faith

**Genesis 1:1** — Creation of heavens and earth

## Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

### Study Questions

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1. Do you recognize your own sinfulness, or do you compare yourself favorably to others?
2. How does acknowledging your inability to purify yourself drive you to Christ?

### Interlinear Text

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מִי	יֹאמַר	זָכַרְתִּי	לִבִּי	טָהֵרָה	יְמִחֲטָאִתִּי
H4310	Who can say	clean	I have made my heart	I am pure	from my sin
	H559	H2135	H3820	H2891	H2403

### Additional Cross-References

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**Ecclesiastes 7:20** (Sin): For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.

**1 Kings 8:46** (Sin): If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near;

**Job 14:4** (Parallel theme): Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.

**Job 25:4** (Parallel theme): How then can man be justified with God? or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?

**Job 15:14** (Parallel theme): What is man, that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

**1 Corinthians 4:4** (Parallel theme): For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

**James 3:2** (Parallel theme): For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

