**Is thy heart right with God?**

**Introduction**

1. The Bible consistently places the emphasis on the inner man.
2. This does not negate the importance and necessity of outward conformity to truth, but shows the proper order of things – **cf. Matthew 23:25-26**
3. We fool ourselves if we think the outward “play” of Christianity, if persisted in, will eventually lead to the full inward change of the heart. (Fake it till you make it.)
   1. All this accomplishes is a cold, inconsistent life of merely resembling the very surface of Christianity. It makes true discipleship hard, if not impossible.
   2. However, when the heart undergoes a full surrender, and sincere transformation, not only will the proper actions of worship and service consistently appear, but they will take on greater meaning and purpose within the truly convicted soul.
4. We must not put the cart before the horse but ensure that our heart is truly right with God, and then He will be able to shape us into the image of His Son.
5. The Position of the Heart
6. ***“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.” (Proverbs 4:23)***
   1. ***“Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.” (NLT)***
   2. Everything we’re called to be as Christians cannot happen without the heart being right.
      1. **Ezekiel 18:31; 36:26-27** – God’s desire for His people requires a new heart.
      2. **Luke 1:17 (cf. Malachi 4:6)** – John’s ministry to prepare the way for the Lord.
7. **Matthew 15:11, 17-20** – the heart content translates to speech which translates to action.
   1. **Luke 6:43-45** – it is impossible to be what God desires without the heart being right.
   2. **James 3:14, 16; 4:8** – when the heart is not right, it is primed for all sorts of evil. It must be cleansed if we are to act right.
      1. ***“confusion”*** – *akatastasia* – “Jas. 3:16, ‘revolution or anarchy’” (VINE); “opposition to established authority, disorder, unruliness” (BDAG)
8. ***“word of life”* (Philippians 2:16)** cannot produce life without the receptive heart. (Seed won’t produce without proper soil.)
   1. **Matthew 13:14-15** – the heart affects the hearing and the seeing.
   2. Example of dramatic extent – **Matthew 12:22-30, 33-34** – even with something as clear as casting out of demons the Pharisees were unable to believe in Jesus, or speak truth because their hearts weren’t right.
   3. YOU CAN HEAR THE BEST SERMON EVER ON ANY GIVEN SUBJECT, AND WITHOUT A RIGHT HEART YOU WON’T BE CONVINCED TO CHANGE.
9. God Knows Your Heart
10. ***“the LORD searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.” (1 Chronicles 28:9)***
    1. **John 2:23-25** – Jesus knew their hearts, what was in them.
    2. **Matthew 9:2-4** – knew the thoughts of their hearts.
11. Jesus knows us better than we know ourselves – **Mark 10:17-22**
    1. **(v. 20)** – the man was generally a devoted person.
    2. **(v. 21)** – Jesus knew his heart, and that it wasn’t fully given to God – something was greater that his devotion to God.
    3. Not a disinterested, secularized man, but his heart wasn’t where it needed to be.
       1. Led to his rejection of Jesus’ requirement for complete devotion to God.
12. Should lead to us petitioning God constantly through Jesus to show us our true heart, and help us to change – **Psalm 139:23-24**
    1. The word is His instrument to show us – **Hebrews 4:12**
    2. This will show us if we are like David, ***“a man after [God’s] own heart”* (1 Samuel 13:14).**
13. Is thy heart right with God? (What does a heart right with God look like?)
14. Have you rent your heart?
    1. **Joel 2:12-14** – a call to repentance after great destruction in judgment.
       1. Judgment on ungodliness/sin by swarm of locusts that devoured the land and all their resources.
       2. Such meant to incite repentance – it is not yet too late – **(vv. 13b-14)** – He might relent and bring blessing.
       3. Condition – **(vv. 12-13)** – turn to Him in penitence, rend heart.
          1. **(v. 12)** – all heart – sincerity and totality, i.e. not simply an action to stop judgment, but to truly correct wrong.
             1. Not merely outward. 🡪
          2. **(v. 13)** – rend your heart.
             1. Contrition of heart – **Psalm 51:17**
             2. Heart – intellect, will, emotions/affections

**Rent heart is in reaction to the exposure of the heart being contrary to God’s will.**

**Cf. 2 Timothy 2:16** – doctrine (teaching appeals to the intellect), reproof (rebuke convicts of wrong, brings shame, appeals to the emotions), correction (reflecting change of will).

* + - * 1. ***“’Turn to Me with all your heart…rend your heart…return to the Lord your God” (vv. 12-13)*** – the rending of the heart is a part of the process of turning to the Lord to be faithful.
        2. “But since the rending of the garments was the outward sign of very vehement grief, it was no commonplace superficial sorrow, which the prophet enjoined, but one which should pierce and rend the inmost soul, and empty it of its sins and its love for sin.” (Albert Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, Joel 2:13)
        3. ““Such a penitent rends and ‘rips up by a narrow search the recesses of the heart, to discover the abominations thereof,’ and pours out before God ‘the diseased and perilous stuff’ pent up and festering there, ‘expels the evil thoughts lodged in it, and opens it in all things to the reception of divine grace’…’This rending then is the casting out of the sins and passions.’” (ibid.)
  1. **Galatians 2:20; 6:14-15** – descriptive of the action and function of a rent heart.
     1. **Crucified** – putting self (intellect, will, emotions) in service of sin to a shameful death. (World – i.e. no longer has the mind for the world.)
     2. **Christ lives in me/new creation** – the death and emptying of worldly/sinful self-will was for the purpose of yielding control to Christ.
  2. Circumcision of the heart – **Acts 7:51** (uncircumcised – resist God’s will); **Romans 2:25-29** (circumcised – keeping will of God from inward sincerity); **Colossians 2:11** (putting off sin, and self-will)
  3. “Have thine affections been nailed to the cross?...Dost thou count all things for Jesus but loss? Hast thou dominion o’er self and o’er sin?...Over all evil without and within? Is thy heart right with God?” (*Is Thy Heart Right With God*, Hoffman, Elisha A.)
     1. What Jesus was doing with the rich young ruler – **Matthew 19:20-22** – he lacked one thing, and Jesus was seeking to get him to commit to truly rending his heart to empty it of the final thing to make him completely devoted to God.

1. Does He have your whole heart?
   1. The rending of the heart is necessary to accomplish the complete surrender of our hearts to God.
      1. Takes introspection – **2 Corinthians 13:5; James 1:22-25**
      2. When we’ve honestly reflected on ourselves in comparison to God’s will, ripped our heart open and emptied it of all that is contrary to Him, then we’ve readied ourselves for His complete control.
   2. Not a question of whether you are convinced of God’s existence, or that the Bible is His inspired word, or that His church is no other than the one established on Pentecost, or that you know the true pattern of salvation or of the work/worship/organization of the church, or that you attend faithfully, or that you generally abstain from worldliness, etc.
      1. **More fundamental, but also ironically many times the greater challenge.**
      2. **James 4:5** – He’s jealous and wants us entirely.
   3. **1 Corinthians 6:13, 17, 19-20** – body for Lord, one spirit w/ Him, not our own, glorify God in body and spirit.
      1. A oneness of thought, desire, and will which manifest in the usage of the body.
      2. **John 17:20-21** – speaking of unity of multiple but starts with individual unity of one to God in Christ.
   4. Such a heart will be reflected in a continual willingness to change as growth occurs – i.e. if I am truly surrendered to God in my heart, I will make necessary changes as I grow in my knowledge of His will.
      1. We will stop doing what we discover is sinful, and we will start doing what we discover is required – without hesitation or question.
   5. Such a heart led to:
      1. Abel offering a sacrifice in the exact way God said to.
      2. Enoch walking with God.
      3. Noah building an ark for a universal flood, such as had never been seen.
      4. Abraham leaving his homeland.
      5. Abraham offering Isaac.
      6. Moses’ parents hiding him from Pharaoh.
      7. Moses choosing to suffer with God’s people.
   6. “Are all thy pow’rs under Jesus’ control?...Does He each moment abide in thy soul? Is thy heart right with God?” (*Is Thy Heart Right With God*, Hoffman, Elisha A.)
   7. Love with all heart – **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**
   8. Constant thought/awareness/focus – **Psalm 1:2; 119:97**
   9. Such a heart means God eclipses everything, and even more so, is the governing force in everything; is a part of everything – ***“but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:15, NASB)***.
      1. **Colossians 1:27** – Christ in you.
      2. **Colossians 3:3** – life hidden with Christ.
      3. **Colossians 3:4** – Christ our life.

**Conclusion**

1. The heart is the key to a true life of service in Christ which will end in eternal reward.
2. A heart that is right with God, entirely surrendered, and truly mastered by His will, is going to yield to every jot and tittle of ***“the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).***
3. Until we decide to give ourselves to Christ in this way we will be inconsistent in our service to God, and what we do will lack depth, true purpose, and substance.