

Understanding the Heart of Man Romans 6:16-18

Scripture uses the word ***“heart”*** *to describe the inner man who thinks, feels, and decides what he believes, what he likes or dislikes, and what he’ll do and not do.* **Today we will examine the word heart.**

God made you in His own image, after His own likeness. This idea refers not so much to the physical part of man as it does to the inner man that thinks, feels, and makes choices. *The heart is vital to our relationship with God.* The Lord Jesus said in **Mt. 22:37-40**, ***“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”*** *This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.”* Solomon wisely advised us in **Proverbs 4:23**, ***“Watch over your heart with diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.”***

The Lord Jesus knows our hearts. **John 2:25** says about Jesus that, ***“He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man.”*** And in **Hebrews 4:13** we read, ***“And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.”***

Our hearts function in many different aspects of our lives, including our thoughts, our feelings, and our volition. The heart is our inner person that remembers, makes decisions, and makes plans for the future. *The heart is the very core of our being.* **We have a relationship with God, when our hearts belong to Him and we have determined to do His will and follow the Lord Jesus Christ.** The Lord Jesus in **Mt. 7:21** said, ***“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”***

The heart is where our thoughts arise, where our reason and our memory arise. The heart is where we recognize the greatness and benevolence of God. Scripture speaks directly to our minds to educate, to reprove, to correct, and to train us in righteousness. If we listen with our hearts to Scripture, we can come to know our Creator and our Savior. **God gave us hearts and minds to study His word.** And so, let’s not waste our hearts on things that do not matter. One day we will face God to give an account for our lives. *God will also judge our hearts.* Remember Jesus warning in **Mt. 5:27-28**, ***“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”***

According to Scripture, the heart is the source from which the emotions flow. God commanded Israel in **Lev. 19:17-18**, ***“You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”*** Both love and hate come from the heart. And so, our hearts choose whether we love the Lord and whether or not we love our neighbor.

We will also decide in our hearts whether we trust the Lord. **Prov. 3:5-7** says, ***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways***

acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.” What we decide in our hearts will always spread to our decisions and our behavior.

*The heart is where our desires arise. **Ps. 37:4** says, “**Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.**” If we desire God, seek Him, and serve Him, and He will bless us; but if we allow fleshly desires to rule our lives, we will separate ourselves from God’s blessings. **Romans 8:12-13** says, “**So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.**”*

*The heart chooses and plans. **Prov. 16:1** says, “**We can make our own plans, but the LORD gives the right answer.**” People imagine in their hearts they can do as they please, but God is watching. **Prov. 19:21** says, “**Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the LORD will stand.**”*

Solomon counseled the young to consider their life choices. God does want us to enjoy life, but He is going to hold us accountable for our choices. In **Ecclesiastes 11:9** he says, “**Rejoice, young man, during your childhood, and let your heart be pleasant during the days of young manhood. And follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes. Yet know that God will bring you to judgment for all these things.**” Desiring sin in our hearts won’t justify our sins. Saying we love someone or somebody doesn’t justify breaking God’s commandments.

In **Mt. 15:18-19** Jesus teaches us that, “**the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.**” The desires of our hearts can lead us toward God or away from God. **And because our hearts lead to our actions, God takes notice of the heart.** **Genesis 6:5** discusses men’s hearts during the days of Noah, “**Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.**”

Selfishness and sin can lead people to harden their hearts against God. And when the heart is only evil continually, one’s behavior will be evil too! Intent leads to action. **I have heard people say that when they have sinned, that God made them that way; but God doesn’t make us sinners.** What He created He created perfect; it was sin in the heart that turned people to sin. We choose to sin and we are responsible for our choices. **James 1:13-15** says, “**Let no man say when he is tempted, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.**”

I have also heard people say, “God wants me to be happy”; **but it is wrong to think that God wants us to be happy in our sins.** God doesn’t call us to worldly happiness; He calls us to righteousness. We should never imagine that worldly happiness can compare to the inexpressible joy that arises from a good conscience. The prophet of God said in **Habakkuk 1:13**, “**Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, and you cannot look on wickedness with favor.**”

Please don't let your hearts deceive you. In **Jeremiah 17:9-10** we read, *"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? I the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."*

Romans 1:21-23 says this about ancient mankind, *"For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."* What foolishness to honor the creature rather than the Creator, but people still have their idols.

Some glorify science as if man created science; but who gave us our bodies, our souls, and our spirits? And who gave them to scientists? Do you honestly believe people could know anything if God had not enabled them? Man's intellect didn't come from primordial soup; only a divine intellect could produce a human intellect. And that's why we must honor the Creator, God, not the creature, man. When people exalt the thinking of men and lose sight of God's teaching, they may profess to be wise; but such thinking leads to foolishness.

When people harden their hearts against God, they hurt themselves. When Israel hardened their hearts against God and worshiped idols, He punished them by allowing Babylon to destroy Jerusalem and take them into captivity. After 70 years God promised they would return to Israel and to Him as their God. In **Ezekiel 11:19-20** God said, *"And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. They will be My people, and I shall be their God."*

The N.T. warns against allowing our hearts to harden. Sin will harden the heart against God. **Eph. 4:17-19** says, *"So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness."*

Did you know that even Christians who've known the kindness of the Lord can develop hardened hearts when they let evil into their lives? **Hebr. 3:12-13** puts it this way, *"Take care, brethren, that there not be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God. But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called 'Today,' so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."*

Now on the positive side, the Bible talks of a heart that prompts a person to do good to the Lord. In **Exodus 25:2** God told Moses, *"Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution."* God wants us to give to the church willingly and cheerfully, in **2 Cor. 9:7** God says, *"Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."* Now unlike the contribution of the Jews, God no longer demands a tithe or a tenth; nor does He

limit our gifts. We can give as much as our hearts desire. **Whatever we give, let us give generously and cheerfully.**

God desires that we do more than merely keep His laws. He wants obedience from our hearts. And please understand this: True devotion encompasses the whole person. The Lord said to Solomon in **1 Kings 9:4-5**, ***“As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”*** God wants whole-hearted, loving obedience from His people.

The Lord has never wanted hypocrisy that only practices righteousness to only be seen by others. Pretended worship or showmanship has never pleased God. In **Jn. 23-24** Jesus said, ***“the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in Spirit and truth.”*** True worship isn’t a theatrical production or display of talents; it is a heartfelt praise for the Lord. **Hebrews 12:28-29** says, ***“Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.”***

Gratitude for the cross of Christ and for what God has done for us every day should move us to serve Him with all our hearts. We must stop forgetting God and turn our hearts to Him. God is well aware of our hearts. The prophet Ezekiel, inspired of God, spoke to a rebellious Judah, hoping to open their hearts. He said in **Ezekiel 18:30b-32**, ***“Repent, and turn from your sins. Don’t let them destroy you? Put all your rebellion behind you, and find yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O people of Israel? I don’t want you to die, says the Sovereign LORD. Turn back and live!”*** We must not allow our hearts to harden against God.

The Lord commanded Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse the Bethlehemite as the new king to replace Saul, who God rejected. Samuel looked at Eliab and thought that he was surely the Lord’s anointed. ***“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart’”*** (**1 Sam. 16:7**). God knows your heart, whether you love Him or love something else.

In **Mt. 6:24** Jesus said, ***“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”*** What you treasure and love tells where your heart is.

You may not be close to God, but you can be! **Wherever you are in life, you can find God.** Moses told Israel that even when they have wandered from God, they can find Him. In **Deut. 4:29** we read, ***“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him is you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul.”***

Where is your heart? Do you seek God? *Search the Scriptures and listen to God! And you will find God there!* Believe in the LORD Jesus – the Bible tells us that without faith you cannot please God (Hebr. 11:6). Repent of your sins – the Bible tells us that unless you repent, you will perish in your sins (Lk. 13:3). Then confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and be baptized into Christ – that is immersed in water for the forgiveness of your sins as was commanded by Peter under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, (Acts 2:38). Won't you believe today? Jesus said, ***“My yoke is easy and my burden is light.”*** Everything is ready, won't you make the decision to come to Jesus and worship him this day.