



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 9

March 19, 2023

No. 12

With All Your Heart

Kyle Pope

Mark 12:30 reads: “‘you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment” (NKJV).

Our world often speaks of acting with the “heart,” but unless we are talking about health, this usually doesn’t mean the vessel that pumps blood through our body. Instead, it refers to the seat of our emotion and sensation. We refer to those who pursue their interests as “following their heart.” The stomach of a hungry man is playfully said to be, “the key to a man’s heart.” This use of the concept of the “heart” is often set in contrast to pure thought and reason. The foolish lover may be said to “follow his heart, but not his head.” The older woman may counsel the young woman to “listen to her head, and not her heart.”

The heart as it is portrayed in Scripture is not independent of thought and reason. Consider a number of passages that illustrate this. As Jesus taught He explained to His disciples why He used parables and why they were not understood. He said, “the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them” (Matt. 13:15).

Here Jesus speaks of the heart being able to “understand” but failing to do so. The heart as Jesus portrays it can grow dull. When Jesus spoke of defilement, He helped the people understand that defilement is internal. He taught, “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” In this text it is the “heart” that thinks. Jesus shows that the heart is the birthplace of defilement, in that it produces the types of behavior that defile the body and mind. In the same way, Scripture elsewhere teaches that it is the heart that can become hardened (Matt. 19:8), thus rejecting the rational influence of God’s word. It is the heart that can doubt (Mark 11:23), thus minimizing the comfort that faith should offer to our thoughts and anxieties.

This is not to suggest that the heart is divorced from emotion. It is the heart that forgives a person. At the end of the parable of the unmerciful servant who refused to forgive although he had been forgiven, in speaking of the servant’s punishment Jesus said, “So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses” (Matt. 18:35). “Heartfelt” forgiveness is not ritual with no substance. It is genuine. It is meaningful. Although it may be “heart-wrenching” it must be sincere.

When Jesus spoke to the scribe about the “first and greatest commandment,” the man said of the text above: “to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one’s neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices” (Mark 12:33). Jesus said that this man was not far from the kingdom.

Unlike the modern concept of the heart that is separate from reason and thought, the heart as the Bible portrays it “thinks.” When Jesus perceived the disciples arguing about who was the greatest, He was said to know the “thought of their heart” (Luke 9:47).

How the heart focuses its thoughts, affects how the things of God are received. This, in turn, affects the deeds that one does. The sinner “out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil” (Luke 6:45). The word grows when it is planted in the “noble and good” heart (Luke 8:15). This is what explains conversion. The proud heart who hears the gospel doubts because his dull, hardened heart will not let it grow. Yet, humble hearts, which hear the truth, just as those

hearts on the day of Pentecost, will be “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37) and moved to obey the gospel. Paul told the Romans that it is the heart that “believes unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10).

From a Biblical standpoint the rational acceptance of the word of God produces faith. This is not a faith that comes from imagination or wishful thinking. While faith is not based upon sight (2 Cor. 5:7), it is wrong to hold that it is based upon nothing. God’s word is its source. Paul also told the Romans that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

Our love for God must be “with all your heart.” So many in our world claim wholehearted love for God, yet walk in sin, harbor ungodly thoughts and attitudes, and allow themselves to maintain ignorance of God’s word.

Let’s never make the mistake of thinking that giving our “heart” to God just means that we have strong emotions for Him. The “heart” God wants is much more than just our feelings, passions, and emotions. It is that part of us which thinks, believes, forgives, is cut, and is able to motivate us to good works. That is what God demands from us and He will be satisfied with no less.

What Will I Do?

“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1-4

As we have been studying about the Holy Spirit it is obvious that God (the Father, Son and Holy Spirit) want everyone to be saved. (2 Peter 3:9) Just consider many of the things God does or has done in the many words that describe it.

Love ... John 3:16; Romans 5:8

Sacrifice...Hebrews 9:26; Hebrews 10:5

Propitiation...1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10

Redemption...Ephesians 1:7, Hebrews 9:12

Ransom...Mark 10:45, 1 Timothy 2:6

Mediation...1 Timothy 2:5, Hebrews 8:6

Guarantee...2 Corinthians 1:22, 2 Corinthians 5:5

Intercession...Romans 8:34

Forgiveness...Acts 5:31, Ephesians 1:7

All of these words reveal just how much God desires to have a close relationship with anyone who truly wants to know Him.

“so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;” Acts 17:27

It will never be a question of what God has done but what we will do or not do. God has given us the choice. Free will! Your free will! Look at all He has done and it should be easy to love Him for He has first loved us. 1 John 4:19

STACY