

THE HEART

Matthew 22:36-38 Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Proverbs 20:9 Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?

What is SIN? Sin is anything that disobeys, dishonors or disregards God. There are sins of commission and sins of omission. We have a sinful nature (SIN) and we also do sinful acts (SINS).

WHY DO WE SIN?

Philosophy says we do wrong things because of primal urges left over from the evolutionary process, or because of the collective experience of our respective cultures. Some philosophers would even say that we really don't do all that much wrong, that we are overlooking our essential goodness! But the Bible has a much different perspective ...

Romans 5:12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:

Romans 5:14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

Through one man's sin the whole human race fell into sin! You may think that isn't fair, but it is still true. Just like the US President declaring war affects the whole nation, so Adam's sin affected all of us. But there is still good news ...

Romans 5:19 For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

You are either in ADAM or in JESUS ... and if you are still in Adam you are a sinner by nature and by actions. You have a sinful HEART.

Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

Proverbs 27:19 As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Your life is a river and your heart is the spring that feeds it. Sin issues can only be dealt with by traveling upstream to the heart. If there is pollution in the river, you have to look upstream for the source! Counseling, self-help and even religion only address BEHAVIOR, but Jesus said that attitude and action problems are really heart problems.

Matthew 5:28 But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

Mark 7:20-23 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

WHAT DO WE DO?

1. BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

- we write books about dealing with these problems, but they only help us temporarily – like treating the symptoms but not the disease
- we make RULES for ourselves (and others!) – this is not necessarily bad but it doesn't go upstream to the source of the problem
- God wants more than for you to be a good person!
- just rearranging the flesh leads to either pride or despair (i.e. diets)

2. REGENERATION

- don't just keep fishing junk out of the river downstream!
- Jesus is now "upstream" in my life – it flows out of HIM

Ezekiel 36:26-27 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Proverbs 5:12 (OLD HEART) And say, How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised reproof;

Psalms 37:4 (NEW HEART) Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

It's not that our bad desires are too strong, it's that our good desires are too weak – not being passionless, but passionate about right things!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Do you have a new heart, or are you just obeying Christian rules? How do you know the difference?

What is one thing God has been teaching you recently about how your own heart is the source behind an issue you are dealing with?

What are some practical things you found in your own life that nourish your new heart?