

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

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

Proverbs 4:23 (NLT) Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do.

- A great deal of current "Christian" doctrine is based on the subjective experiences and feelings of modern believers, rather than on the Bible. Obviously, this has led to serious problems in today's church! One of the main reasons for this grievous error is a misunderstanding of what the Bible means when it addresses the subject of "the heart." For example:
- **Proverbs 3:5** Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.
- **Matthew 6:21** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
- **Matthew 22:37** 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.
- **Matthew 18:35** So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.
- **Mark 11:23** For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.
- **Romans 10:9** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.
- Many people think that they have failed God, that they are not worthy of His promises, or even that they have lost their salvation – all because of the way they **FEEL!** But, to be honest, we all know from experience that feelings "come and go" in living for God. So, that must mean we're ALL in trouble, right? WRONG! **Never does the Bible teach that "feelings" are the central issue in living for God!**
- The problem with each of these verses is our modern insistence on the fact that the word "heart" is synonymous with "feelings," because that is what it means in the western hemisphere! (If we say a man loves a woman "with all of his heart," we mean "with intense feelings.")

- **The Bible word for "feelings" is not "heart" but "bowels"!**
 - **2 Corinthians 6:12** Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels.
 - **Philippians 1:8** For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.
 - **Colossians 3:12** Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering;
 - **Philemon 7** For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother.
 - **Philemon 12** Whom I have sent again: thou therefore receive him, that is, mine own bowels:
 - **Philemon 20** Yea, brother, let me have joy of thee in the Lord: refresh my bowels in the Lord.
 - **1 John 3:17** But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?
- *Illustration: Mark Lowry video clip from "Mouth In Motion"*
- **THE WORD "HEART" IN THE BIBLE COMES MAINLY FROM THE HEBREW WORD "LEB" AND THE GREEK WORD "KARDIA."** In each case, the word includes feelings, but is not limited to feelings!
- **The heart, biblically speaking, is the center of man's life and his RATIONAL NATURE.** So when the Bible uses the word "heart," the proper synonym is not "emotions," but "will."
- That's why the Bible says the heart can ...
 - presume (Esther 7:5)
 - stand steadfast (1 Corinthians 7:37)
 - obey (Romans 6:17)
 - perceive (Deuteronomy 29:4)
 - know (Proverbs 14:10)
 - understand (Isaiah 44:18)
 - ponder (Luke 2:19)

- **These are obviously acts of the intellect, not of the emotions.** But the source of other “feelings of the heart” is not quite as apparent. Are the following acts of the intellect or the emotions?
- The heart can also experience ...
 - love (1 Timothy 1:5)
 - hate (Leviticus 19:17)
 - joy (Isaiah 65:14)
 - heaviness (Proverbs 12:25)
 - despair (Ecclesiastes 2:20)
 - being darkened (Romans 1:21)
 - being hardened (Isaiah 63:17)
- **Because of the conditioning of Western culture, we tend to think of these as feelings of EMOTION, but in actuality they are choices made by the WILL of man!** Modern psychology is continually finding evidence to prove that harmful feelings are caused by hurtful thinking, not vice versa!
 - LOVE is first a choice, not a feeling!
 - HATE is first a choice, not a feeling!
 - JOY is first a choice, not a feeling!
 - HEAVINESS is first a choice, not a feeling!
- **Proverbs 23:7a** For as [a man] thinketh (NOT “FEELETH”!) in his heart, so is he:
- **WHERE THIS DISTINCTION BETWEEN BECOMES ABSOLUTELY CRUCIAL IS IN MATTERS OF SERVING GOD!**
- What is the condition of your heart? In large part, that will be determined by your **CHOICES** and **REACTIONS** to the Lord, to people, and to circumstances around you!
 - When you see a **NEED**, do you have a willing heart that helps, or a hardened heart that ignores it?
 - When the Lord confronts you with your **SIN**, do you have a tender heart that repents, or a hypocritical heart that rejects Him?
 - When you hear **PREACHING**, do you have an obedient heart that plans to implement the truth in your own life, or a double heart that enjoys discovering a new idea but fails to follow through with it?
- **CHOICE** is the vital issue when it gets down to the heart of the matter!

POSITIVE HEART CHOICES		NEGATIVE HEART CHOICES	
Grieved Heart	Gen. 6:6	Evil Heart	Heb. 3:12
Willing Heart	Exo. 25:2	Hardened Heart	Exo. 4:21
Stirred Heart	Exo. 35:21	Deceived Heart	Deu. 11:16
Wise Heart	Exo. 35:35	Non-Perceiving Heart	Deu. 29:4
Another Heart	1 Sam. 10:9	Proud Heart	Psa. 101:5
Perfect Heart	1 Chr. 12:28	Presumptuous Heart	Est. 7:5
Tender Heart	2 Chr. 34:27	Hypocritical Heart	Job 36:13
Sorrowful Heart	Neh. 2:2	Lifted-up Heart	Deu. 8:14
Faithful Heart	Neh. 9:8	Firm, hard heart	Job 41:24
Soft Heart	Job 23:16	Iniquitous Heart	Psa. 41:6
Upright Heart	Job 33:3	Wicked Heart	Psa. 58:2
Communing Heart	Psa. 4:4	Erring Heart	Psa. 95:10
Heart of Wax	Psa. 22:14	Fat and Greasy Heart	Psa. 119:70
Pure Heart	Psa. 24:4	Evilly-exercised Heart	2 Pet. 2:14
Broken Heart	Psa. 34:18	Desolate Heart	Psa. 143:4
Panting Heart	Psa. 38:10	Despising Heart	Pro. 5:12
Failing Heart	Psa. 40:12	Deceitful Heart	Pro. 12:20
Proclaiming Heart	Psa. 45:1	Bitter Heart	Pro. 14:10
Fixed Heart	Psa. 57:7	Backslidden Heart	Pro. 14:14
Living Heart	Psa. 69:32	Foolish Heart	Pro. 15:7
Established Heart	Psa. 112:8	Human Heart	Pro. 15:11
Understanding Heart	Pro. 2:2	Abominable Heart	Pro. 26:25
Retaining Heart	Pro. 4:4	Double Heart	James 1:8
Sound Heart	Pro. 14:30	Wounded Heart	Psa. 109:22
Merry Heart	Pro. 17:22	Defiled Heart	Mat. 15:18
New Heart	Eze. 18:31	Rebellious Heart	Jer. 5:23
Fleshly Heart	Eze. 11:19	Arrogant Heart	Isa. 9:9
Purposeful Heart	Dan. 1:8	Evil-imagining Heart	Jer. 17:9
Pondering Heart	Luk. 2:19	Whorish Heart	Eze. 6:9
Forgiving Heart	Mat. 18:35	Stony Heart	Eze. 11:19
Unblameable Heart	1 The. 3:13	Weak Heart	Eze. 16:30
Blood-sprinkled Heart	Heb. 10:22	Despiteful Heart	Eze. 25:15
Nourished Heart	Jam. 5:5	Beastly Heart	Dan. 4:16
Sanctified Heart	1 Pet. 1:22	Divided Heart	Hos. 10:2
Assured Heart	1 Joh. 3:19	Gross Heart	Mat. 13:15
Honest, Good Heart	Luk. 8:15	Heavy Heart	Pro. 31:6
Burning Heart	Luk. 24:32	Reasoning Heart	Mar. 2:6
Single Heart	Act. 2:46	Envious, Striving Heart	Jam. 3:14
One Heart	Act. 4:32	Lustful Heart	Psa. 81:12
Opened Heart	Act. 16:14	Troubled Heart	Joh. 14:1
Obedient Heart	Rom. 6:17	Hard, Impenitent Heart	Rom. 2:5
Circumcised Heart	Rom 2:29	Uncircumcised Heart	Act. 7:51
Believing Heart	Rom. 10:9	Darkened Heart	Rom. 1:21
Steadfast Heart	1 Cor. 7:37	Anguished Heart	1 Cor. 2:4
Enlarged Heart	1 Cor. 6:11	Blind Heart	Eph. 4:18
Caring Heart	1 Cor. 8:16	Unknowing Heart	Heb 3:10
Singing Heart	Eph. 5:19	Condemning Heart	1 Joh. 3:20
Established Heart	Heb. 13:9	Overwhelmed Heart	Psa. 61:2

- Perhaps the most common question that Pastors get asked in counseling is some variation of, **“Why do I FEEL this way?”** Most people don’t like the Biblical answer: **“Because of a CHOICE you made!”** They would sooner have something or someone to blame. And they like even less the Biblical solution: **“Make a different choice to feel a different way!”**
- Many people use their **FEELINGS** as a barometer to measure their walk with God. If they feel bad, they think they are doing bad, even though they are making choices according to the Word of God. If they feel good, they think they are doing good, even though they are making choices contrary to the Word of God. BUT FEELINGS ARE DECEPTIVE!
- A much better barometer is our actual **CHOICES** as we live for God each day. Are we walking after the flesh or after the spirit? Are we disobeying the Word of God or obeying it? No matter how our emotions feel, the DESIRES (CHOICES) of our heart accurately diagnose our spiritual condition.
- God wants to live in our hearts – not our feelings, but our choices!
 - ***2 Corinthians 1:22*** *Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.*
- God wants us to obey His word – not just agree with it, but do it!
 - ***Luke 8:15*** *But [the seed] on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*
- God wants to commune with us daily – not just when we feel like it!
 - ***Ephesians 5:19-20*** ¹⁹ *Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;* ²⁰ *Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*
- God wants us to live above sin – that takes a daily choice on our part!
 - ***Galatians 5:16*** *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*
- God wants our worship – as an act of our will, not just our emotions!
 - ***Hebrews 13:15*** *By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*
- **There are days you won’t “feel it” – but choose to do it anyway!**