

The Heart

The State of the Heart

Readings:

'As for you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind; for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever' (1Chronicals 28: 9).

'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart; I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings' (Jeremiah 17: 9, 10).

'My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways' (Proverbs 23: 26).

Our message today is about 'the heart'.

In the bible, we numerously read that God searches the heart.

Why are God's eyes always looking at the heart?

It is because the nature of the fallen human heart is deceitful; it is full of cunningness and crookedness; it is indirect and not straight. It is written: *'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?'*

The worst thing in the human fallen nature is the deceitful, wicked, and crooked heart.

In this series we are talking about the foundations of following Christ. Last time, we discussed one of these foundations which is: *'the cost'*. We said that grace is free, but we need to prepare a place inside us for the grace. There is a cost in preparing this place. Therefore, the cost is important for receiving any divine gift or grace because we need to prepare a place for this grace or gift.

What does it mean to follow Christ?

It does not mean that I pray, read the bible and go to church and that is all. Many people have been doing these things for many years without growing spiritually or moving forward because they do not understand the true following of Christ.

The true following of Christ means that every time I pray or have fellowship with God, I receive a grace. This grace can come when I am praying, reading the bible, receiving the divine mysteries, or in my ministry whilst sharing the word of God with others. I find that my heart is opened and it receives a grace.

After some time of receiving grace above grace, I find that I am being transformed. I will experience that some sins and some characteristics of the old man are totally disappearing from my life while new characteristics of Christ, of the new man, come into my life, grow, and become established.

I then look at myself and praise God because I had longed for this to happen in my life and it began to actually happen. I longed to get rid of a certain sin and this has actually happened. I longed for receiving divine characteristics and this has actually happened. I can notice it and others around me can notice the change as well. By this, God would be glorified in my life.

We often pray that God would be glorified in our lives. Yet, God is not glorified by words, but when people witness the true change and transformation. They would then ask about the secret of this change and they would desire it.

Therefore, *'the cost'* is the first principle or foundation in following Christ because my life in Christ means receiving grace from Him. Every time I have a true encounter with Christ, I experience His life transferred to me in the form of a grace or a divine gift –what is called: *uncreated energies*. Apostle John writes: *'from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace'* (John 1: 16). By this, one can grow; and without it, no one can grow spiritually.

My life in Christ¹ means receiving successive graces that come from Christ to my life; when His life comes to me, this is a grace, a gift. The life of the Son of God is offered and granted to me and to every person². I need to receive it and hence it comes to me as a grace.

However, it is important to understand that in order to be able to receive this grace, *firstly* there is a cost; and *secondly*, I should understand that the heart is an important inner factor that plays a role in receiving the divine gifts.

Today, we will talk about 'the heart' as a foundation of following Christ.

We need to learn to apply these foundational principles in our lives. If we do not apply them, these talks will be some knowledge of no actual benefit.

¹ Philippians 1:21

² 1 John 4:9

The life in Christ is not knowledge. The knowledge we receive should be lived and manifested; otherwise, we cannot be ministers of the Lord who have the life of Christ and who can transfer it to others³.

I have just highlighted that the heart is the part in the fallen human nature which has an inclination towards crookedness, cunningness, fluctuation and divisiveness. The prophet Jeremiah diagnosed it correctly describing it as *'wicked; who can know it'*. He also said: *'the heart is deceitful above all things'*.

We fluctuate in our relationship with God and in what we give and offer to Him; we do not want to give Him our whole heart. Yet, God requests the whole heart⁴.

The heart is the essential part that receives the divine gifts and graces. This essential part is not prepared and is divided. I like to walk with God but there are other things that I like as well; and I tell myself there is no problem in that. This actually indicates a divided heart.

Since you are a group of ministers, not just any youth group, you need to know that you have a special calling to serve God. You need to look at ministry as a divine calling with a responsibility. A minister or a servant of the Lord is not just a title that we are given. It cannot be as such. We cannot serve God with a divided heart.

Apostle Paul had a special motto in the spiritual life which we can sum up in one word and that is: *'all'*. Let us look at some examples of this:

³ Romans 8:9

⁴ Proverbs 23:26

'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work' (2Corinthians 9: 8).

'Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus' (Colossians 1: 28).

As clear from the above verse, Apostle Paul wants to bring everyone (all) to Christ. He does not only want every man to know Christ and remain at a limited level, but to grow and be mature (perfect man); he wants *all* to be perfect, that is, to grow and mature in knowing Christ.

Our problem these days is that we, as Christians, are not yet willing to give all our life to Christ.

What is it that we have that we do not want to give up!

All what we have is our ego, pride, corruption, uncleanness, emptiness that we are trying to fill with all sort of things, and ambitions.

Are we not willing to give away and surrender these trivial things of the dust and of corruption for Christ's sake?

We cannot be true Christians if we offer part of our lives to Christ and keep another part for our pleasures: a certain relationship, certain passions or desires, certain inclinations or characteristic; things that I like and I am used to and cling to⁵.

We are ministers and so our motto should be to bring every person to Christ; therefore, all our life should be fully for God.

⁵ Luke 9:23; Luke 14:25 – 35

'My son, give me your heart (which means your whole heart), *and let your eyes observe my ways* (which means to look in one direction with a simple eye)' (Proverbs 23: 26). This will make your whole body be full of light (Matthew 6: 22).

The heart is deceitful. The problem of the divided heart is that it hinders us from receiving the grace and it hinders our spiritual growth.

If we have already understood the principle of *'the cost'*, we need to understand that the second principle is *'the heart'* which should be undivided and be fully for Christ –if we want to truly follow Christ and serve Him.

It is true that we are ministers of the Lord, but it is still important to come to points of revision to review our life and correct the matters that need correction.

In the same way we need to learn to count the cost and understand that our life in Christ has a cost, we also need to learn to quieten ourselves and search our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

We need to pray to God to open our eyes to enable us to see the hidden motives in our hearts. We need to learn to see the divisions of the heart. I need to see whether my heart is fully for Christ or if there are parts for other things or other people. If I find something, I should repent. If I do not want to repent and leave this thing, then I need to pray asking God to help me be released from the things I am clinging to or attached to. He will surely help me.

However, the problem happens if I do not desire to be released from a certain matter or a certain wrong relationship. It is not that God does not

answer the prayer but the problem is in the divided unwilling heart. There can be rooted recurring sins that may sometimes need time to get rid of, there is no problem in that; but, the question is whether deep down I desire to get rid of this matter or not. There are things that we find pleasure in and we do not want to let go of. This is a different story.

There is a big difference between two states of the heart. I can go to the Lord saying that I despise such or such sin, yet I am not able to get rid of it and I need Your help. Believe me, in this case, God's mighty hand will be stretched out and will help me. On the other hand, sometimes this hatred of sin is not yet complete in my heart and I pray to God saying I sought You many times in this matter. In this case, God will say: I am upright; I am not crooked like you; you are the one who desires this wrong matter. Because the person wants this sin and is holding unto it, every time, God says: *'go away sin or go away Satan'*, this sin will as though say: *'I am not leaving because this person wants me'*.

Therefore, it is important to be honest with oneself and when this is the case, one can pray asking God to help him despise a certain wrong thing in his life. One can pray: *'Lord. I really wish to get rid of this wrong thing, but I do not despise it enough; help me, to not want it and to despise it because it is fake; it is a bond that is enslaving me; it is not worthwhile; it is a false pleasure; help me to desire the truth, to love the truth, to be inclined to it, to seek it; You Lord Jesus are the Truth.'* After God helps me to despise this binding thing in my life, I then need to ask Him to free me and release me from it.

The problem of repeated and recurring sins, weaknesses and bondages is that our hearts are not refusing them wholeheartedly without division of

heart. If one has an undivided heart that is willing to get rid of a weakness or bondage or a sin, he will be released from it very easily and quickly⁶. The issue is whether the heart is divided or undivided in the matter. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?*

David told his son Solomon: *'know the God of your father, and serve Him with a loyal heart and with a willing mind'* He then continues with the phrase that is repeated several times in the bible: *'for the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts'*.

God cares much about the heart. He knows it well

If our hearts are divided, we will be fake ministers walking towards judgement. We need to know that as ministers we have a divine honourable calling with great privileges; and hence it includes great responsibility.

If we do not know the foundations of walking with Christ, we will be fake ministers, void of foundations, and empty. As a result, we will never be able to transfer life to others or lead them to Christ.

Do you know why our ministry is not an effective ministry?

It is because our life in Christ is not attractive. It is written about Christ that He is the *'Desire of All Nations'* (Haggai 2: 7). When I read this verse, I repented because in my ministry I did not make people desire Christ; I did not reflect Him in that way. Do we serve *the Desire of all Nations?! This means that in our ministry, people should be attracted and drawn to Him because in Christ there are unsearchable riches and mysteries*⁷. When we

⁶ Psalm 86:11b

⁷ Ephesians 3:8

open our mouth to speak about Him, the words should flow like milk and honey⁸. This is because we have Christ, the source of life, in whom there is fullness and satisfaction for all human needs. People should come after us from every place as it is written that people will come from every place asking where the mountain of God is, where the people who worship God on the mountain are⁹.

The Church should be high up on the mountain¹⁰ not down below in the world. Some ministers say we should be pleasant, laugh and joke with people and take things easy and lightly to be able to get close to the people we serve. In fact, if we do so and descend the mountain, no one will see that we are different; we will have the odour of the world. But if our life is holy and lifted up, everyone will look and see that this is the work of God who lifts up those who follow Him; on the other hand, there is the world that brings low those who follow it. The followers of Christ move from glory to glory¹¹; while, the followers of the world move from destruction to more destruction.

People are searching, looking eagerly to find if there is something different from the destruction they are living in. Is there something true and genuine or are all just words that those ministers say while their life is not different from the life of the people in the world. If they find something true, they will seek it –even if we do not say much. It is written that when people find a person following God, they will run after him and hold unto his garment

⁸ Song of Songs 4:11

⁹ Isaiah 2:3

¹⁰ Matthew 5:14

¹¹ 2 Corinthians 3:18

saying let us be with you because there is something in you that we are searching for: *'In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jewish man, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you"'* (Zechariah 8: 23).

Human beings are created in God's image; therefore, deep within them they seek God. They are searching for a door, a way, or an example to follow. We should be this example¹². Yet, we can never be an example if our life is conformed to the world¹³. We should be lifted upwards.

Therefore, we should lay our foundations correctly. The directions and intentions of the heart should be discerned and precisely determined. If one desires to follow God, he needs his heart to be undivided in the matter. He also needs to know that anything else in his heart other than Christ is idols that he should bring out.

Jacob loved God and followed Him; yet, at a certain stage of his life he forgot about God and became estranged from Him; and so his spiritual life became weak. Then, God appeared to him in a dream and told him to return to Bethel, the house of God, the place of the fellowship with God. As a result, Jacob was awakened and he said to his household: *'how come the idols have entered into our house!'* He realised that the idols have entered into his house.

Jacob, the son of Abraham, the father of faith, had idols in his house! The children of God who are baptised and who receive the body and blood of Christ have idols in their hearts! We do not realise that we sometimes reach

¹² 1 Timothy 4:12

¹³ Romans 12:2; James 4: 4

such a state. There should be a solution for this. If we leave the idols in our hearts, we will just be saying words and those who hear us will feel that these are mere words. There are words in our lips, but the heart has other things that are occupying it.

What did Jacob do after God spoke to him?

Jacob wanted to obey God and he made a decision:

*“Then God said to Jacob, “Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother.” And Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, **“Put away the foreign gods that are among you, purify yourselves, and change your garments. Then let us arise and go up to Bethel; and I will make an altar there to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me in the way which I have gone.”** So they gave Jacob all the foreign gods which were in their hands, and the earrings which were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the terebinth tree which was by Shechem’ (Genesis 35: 1 – 4).*

Today, we need to make a similar decision. Today, we need to put away the foreign gods, bury them, tread on them, and cross over.

We serve the Holy One, the Lord who is high above heaven and earth who once told His servants: *‘Be clean, you who bear the vessels of the Lord’* (Isaiah 52: 11). No one can serve Him unless he is clean and purified.

We need to put away the foreign gods¹⁴ and change our clothes. The clothes refer to the conduct and the foreign gods are the idols.

¹⁴ Isaiah 30:22

If we want to continue our journey in serving the Lord we need to understand very well the meaning and implication of serving the Lord. We should bring every man to God; therefore, we have to put away the foreign gods and bury them. This means we will forget about them; we will put them behind us and never look back upon them. We should also change our clothes; we should change our conduct by the work of grace to follow the Holy Lord and serve His Holy Name that is lifted on high¹⁵.

¹⁵ Malachi 1:11