

THE HEART OF MAN

Part 2

Recap

We continue with the series of the heart of man and this is Part 2 of that Bible study. Before we start, I would like to recap on last week's discussion and briefly repeat some of the Scriptures. We began with Matthew 15 where Jesus says,

Matt 15:8 "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me."

Where is your heart? Here Jesus speaks of a hypocritical religion where everything seems to be fine on the outside, but in the heart things are not well. We also examined Matthew 12 where Jesus speaks of the treasure of the heart.

Matt 12:35 "The good man out of his good treasure brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of his evil treasure brings forth what is evil."

In other words, when we speak, we speak out of the heart. James writes about how our words are like the rudder of a ship, giving direction to our lives. What comes out of your mouth is extremely important, and that which comes out of your mouth, comes from your heart. Therefore, what is in your heart, is who you are; it is who you become. That is the direction your life will take.

We also looked at Jeremiah 17, where the prophet says,

Jer 17:1 "The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars."

In other words, the sins we committed, the terrible things we did or what others did to us, are engraved upon the heart. Our past is engraved upon the heart. And we asked this question: Is it possible to erase the engraving of our terrible past? Is that possible?

Jer 17:9 "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

17:10 "I, YHWH, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds."

We asked the question: Whose deceitful heart is he speaking of in this passage? Friends, it is your heart and mine. It is not the people out there; yes, it includes them, but your heart and my heart have a tendency towards being deceitful. The word deceitful means to wear a mask; we don't portray the truth. We display a hypocritical image of who we pretend to be, but it is not the truth of who we really are. We examined how we get to the place where our heart becomes deceitful.

Obad 1:3 "The arrogance of your heart has deceived you ..."

Pride deceives

Pride deceives. I closed Part 1 with the story of the prodigal son. He left his father's house; he had told his father, *"Give me my money, I want to leave."* His life

spiralled more and more out of control, until he ended up in the pigsty. And there, in the pigsty – I call it the *precious pigsty* – he came to his senses. Hy said, *"I will go back to my father, and I will say, 'Father, forgive me, for I have sinned.'"* It is my fault. Forgive me. It is not the people out there who should get the blame, it is I who have sinned.

Friends, this is the beginning of the heart's restoration process, where I am honest with myself, with God and with other people, acknowledging who I really am. **I** need to change. **I** come to God in *repentance*.

Another prodigal son - David

This is where we begin Part 2 and we will take a look at Psalm 51. I call this another prodigal son – king David. God richly blesses him and eventually raises him up to become the king of Israel. But then he commits adultery with Bathsheba and arranges to have her husband murdered. Nathan the prophet comes to David and confronts him by telling him a story of a rich man who had many sheep, and a poor man who had only one ewe lamb. The poor family loved their little lamb very much; the children played with it and it lived in their house. They really loved this lamb. One day the rich man had a visitor, and he didn't want to slaughter one of his sheep for the feast which he was preparing for the visitor, so he killed the poor man's lamb. David becomes angry when he hears this, and says, *"That man ought to die!"* Nathan looks at him and says, *"You are that man."*

I am the man

David is full of remorse before the Lord. He cries before the Lord and says, "*Yes, Lord, I am that man.*" He does not argue, he knows he is guilty. He says, "*I am guilty.*" This is what Psalm 51 is about. Let's read a few verses from there.

Psalm 51:6 "*Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom.*"

God wants me to be honest. Hypocrisy is not honesty. Wearing a mask is not being honest. *God desires honesty in the inner man* – where I can be honest with Him and say, "*Lord, this is who I am.*"

That was the *beginning of the restoration process* for the prodigal son. The restoration happens very quickly when he returns to his father. His father sees him coming from a distance, runs to him, embraces him (even though his son stinks of sweat and pigsty); he removes his ring and places it on his son's finger and says, "*You are my son.*" He clothes him with new clothes and shoes, brings him home and says to his servants, "*Kill the fattened calf. Tonight we will celebrate, my son has come home.*"

Friends, *that calf has been fattened for a long time.* The *father has been waiting for his son.* The Father waits for you to return to Him in honesty; not to return with all kinds of excuses – my dad did this to me, my uncle did that to me; other people did the following – no excuses, friends. We come before God in honesty. God desires "*truth in the innermost being.*" Once we begin the

process with honesty, the restoration happens very quickly.

Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, o God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

This is something that I cannot do on my own. Lord, create in me a clean heart, please. Turn my heart around; give me a pure heart.

51:16 "For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering."

51:17 "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, o God, Thou wilt not despise!"

The prodigal son's heart broke in the pigsty. He recognised *his own sins* and cried before God. *"Lord, I have sinned. I must return to my father."* God doesn't look at our religious activities; the sacrifices we make; the number of times we attend church or how smartly we present ourselves. No, friends, it is not the hypocritical image that we portray to everyone around us that impresses God. It is our heart that God looks at. Where is your heart? *What does your heart look like to God?*

The sin of Israel

There is an interesting passage in Ezekiel 16 where Ezekiel speaks about the bride of God, Israel. It begins where God calls Israel while she was still worthless.

Ezek 16:6 *"When I passed by you and saw you squirming in your blood, I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!' I said to you while you were in your blood, 'Live!'"*

God speaks to her in her worthless state, and He says, "Live!"

Ezek 16:7 *"I made you numerous like plants of the field. Then you grew up, became tall, and reached the age for fine ornaments; your breasts were formed and your hair had grown. Yet you were naked and bare."*

He speaks about this young girl who is growing up, she is reaching maturity.

Ezek 16:8 *"Then I passed by you and saw you, and behold, you were at the time for love; so I spread My skirt over you and covered your nakedness. I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord YHWH."*

Here he refers to the covenant at Sinai when God entered into covenant with the children of Israel and they became His people, His bride. In the next few verses we see how God blessed them greatly; we see how they became a nation and how the whole world sent messengers to them to see what this nation looked like, because they were such a beautiful people.

Ezek 16:14 *"Then your fame went forth among the nations on account of your beauty, for it was perfect because of My splendor which I bestowed on you," declares the Lord YHWH."*

You had a name. You were beautiful. Friends, we then read verse 15, "*But ...*" Although you had a name, although you were so beautiful, there is a "*but*" ... what did you do?

Ezek 16:15 "But you trusted in your beauty and played the harlot because of your fame, and you poured out your harlotries on every passer-by who might be willing."

Reading through the rest of this long chapter, we encounter the most terrible words imaginable. This beautiful bride of God becomes a common prostitute. Where God was their Bridegroom, they turned towards idolatry – other gods. Can you believe it? *The fall came when she became proud*. Scripture says that pride comes before a fall, and her pride led her towards common prostitution. What we read there is terrible. I don't even want to quote it here because they did simply abominable deeds. They committed adultery (idolatry). Scripture says that they were worse than prostitutes, because whilst prostitutes receive money for their services, this nation gave gifts to their lovers to bribe them to come from every direction for their harlotries.

A dramatic turnabout

Thus, they worshipped other gods. God was their Bridegroom, but they took on other gods, other lovers. It is a long and terrible chapter. After a lengthy discussion about the terrible things they had done, we read these amazing prophetic words:

Ezek 16:60 *"Nevertheless, I will remember My covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish an everlasting (new) covenant with you."*

Here he begins to speak of a new covenant. We know about the new covenant of the New Testament. *"I will make a new covenant with you."* Can you believe that a man whose young, beautiful wife becomes a prostitute, committing adultery over and over again, and doing the most terrible things, would take his wife back again and would make a new covenant with her?

Friends, this is what God did for us, His people. We read more about this new covenant in chapter 36.

Ezek 36:26 *"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."*

36:27 *"And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."*

He is going to *remove the heart of stone*. That is the arrogant heart. He wants to *remove* the heart of stone and give us a *new heart*, a soft heart that would love Him and keep His commands.

Jeremiah on the New Covenant

Let's take a look at Jeremiah, who also refers to this new covenant. Jeremiah 31 to 33 speaking of the new covenant is also quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews chapter 8 and 9. However, I only want to read

one verse from Jeremiah 31. Remember we asked the question:

Is it possible to erase that engraving on the heart? Is it possible?

This verse gives an answer to this question. God is speaking to Israel here, and He says,

*Jer 31:4 "Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O **virgin** of Israel! (This woman who is broken because of the terrible deeds that she committed)"*

"Virgin?" This prostitute? God makes her a *virgin* again? Friends, how the clean the blood of Jesus washes! Only the blood of Jesus that was shed for you and me on Calvary can erase that engraving on the heart, to restore it to the heart of a *virgin* again, to clean it again, to make it beautiful again. And He is offering that cleansing process to you and to me.

*"Again I will build you, and you shall be rebuilt, O **virgin** of Israel!"*

No wonder that Isaiah says,

Isa 1:18 "Come now, and let us reason together,' says YHWH, 'Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool.'"

The blood of Jesus washes us this clean. Let's take a look at Psalm 147. I want to answer this question:

Can such a broken heart be restored?

Psalm 147:3 *"He heals the **brokenhearted**, and **binds up their wounds**."*

Brokenhearted – there is the essence, the condition – *brokenheartedness*, a heart that is willing to be honest.

"You desire truth in the innermost being."

A heart that is honest enough to say, *"Lord, forgive me, I was wrong, I did wrong. Forgive me."*

Psalm 147:3 *"He heals the brokenhearted, and binds up their wounds."*

Isn't this beautiful! Don't you want Him to *bind up your wounds*? Those things that keep you awake at night. Things that you know you did wrong; you have done them, they are there in your past. It broke you. He *binds up your wounds* and *makes you whole again*.

The apostle Peter's broken heart restored

I want to close with a story from the Bible. It is the story of Peter. We know that Jesus called Peter from his life of fishing to follow Him. He was an ordinary fisherman. Jesus called him and said, *"Follow Me."* Peter *left everything* behind and followed Jesus for three and a half years, and eventually on the evening before Jesus was to be crucified, Jesus and the disciples were sitting at the table for the last meal together.

After Jesus served them with communion, He spoke to all of them in general and said, *"Tonight you will all fall away because of Me."* Those were difficult words for

them to hear, because they loved Jesus so dearly. And now He is telling them that they are going to deny Him?

Peter declares his love for Jesus

Peter says to Jesus, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away."

Jesus says to Peter, "This very night, before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times."

*Peter answers, "Even if I have to **die with You**, I will not deny You."*

What is this? It is heart issue of pride. And pride goes before a fall. Peter says, *"I am willing to go to prison and even to die for You, that is how much I love You."*

He is therefore proclaiming his love for Jesus as *"agape"* love. Agape love is the highest form of love; *a love that is willing to die for your friend*. Jesus leaves it at that. He keeps quiet.

Gethsemane

As you know, that night Jesus called Peter, James and John aside to the Garden of Gethsemane to go to pray with Him, but after a while they all fell asleep. Peter, who proclaimed he would go to prison and even die for Jesus, couldn't even stay awake for an hour to pray with Jesus.

When the soldiers eventually came, all the disciples run away, Peter included. Jesus gets arrested and taken to the house of Caiaphas to be judged there. Peter followed them at a safe distance and ends up in the house of

Caiaphas. He sits by the fire with the men, warming his hands. The conversation around the fire is quite coarse. Peter is within seeing and hearing distance of what is happening to Jesus. He sees how they beat Him and pluck out His beard, spitting on Him and doing terrible things to Him. All the while Peter watches as this goes on.

Peter denies Jesus

After a while, a slave girl appears, a young girl from the lowest ranks of society. One cannot be intimidated by her; she is merely a slave girl. The slave sees Peter and says to him, *"You are one of Jesus' disciples."* Peter denies this. He claims that he doesn't know Jesus at all.

"I have never seen this Man. I don't know who He is."

Shortly after this, another slave girl comes past, once again not someone to be afraid of. This slave girl also notices Peter. *"You were one of Jesus' disciples, I have seen you with Jesus,"* she says.

"Never," Peter answers, *"What are you talking about?"* He curses and yells at her that she must leave. You must understand, that his pride, his lies, and those swear words all emanate from his heart. Jesus wants to use Peter to do great things in His kingdom, but He cannot use Peter until all of these things are removed from his heart. And these things can only be removed in a pigsty. And now Peter unwittingly finds himself in the pigsty.

The slave girl leaves. A short while later, another young man appears, also a slave, also not someone to be afraid of. He hears the coarse conversation of the men around

the fire, and he says to Peter, "*You were also one of the disciples. Your speech gives you away. You are a Galilean.*"

Peter is frightened by this, and he swears at this young man, telling him to go. He says, "*I do not know this Man at all. I don't know who He is.*" While he is still speaking, a rooster crows, and Peter is devastated as he suddenly remembers Jesus' words spoken earlier on the previous evening, "*This very night, before a cock crows, you will deny Me three times.*"

He thinks to himself, "*What have I done!?*" Friends, the Scripture tells us that Jesus turned around and looked at Peter.

I wonder what was in that look. Was it an angry look that said, "*I told you you would deny Me.*"? No, friends, I don't think so. I think it was a look of love. However, it was a look that penetrates right through you; a look that sees everything that is inside your heart. There is no mask that you can wear that can hide from that penetrating look. This look goes right through you.

Friends, Jesus looks at you and me with that same penetrating look of love. He knows everything. Everything. He knows everything in your past, even to the smallest detail. And still He looks at us with love, just as He looked at Peter.

Peter's regret

Peter is *heartbroken*. He runs outside and the Bible tells us that he *wept bitterly*. He cannot fix this. He cannot withdraw it. He did it and he knows that he is guilty.

The rest of the happenings of that day take place; Jesus is brought before Pilate, He is condemned. He is beaten terribly; a crown of thorns is beaten onto His head, the thorns pierce in. The Bible says that He was tortured to such a degree that He was unrecognisable. Eventually they take Him to the cross, beat iron nails into the wooden cross, through His hands and feet, and then they lift Him up to hang from those nails on the cross, to die a cruel and excruciating death. As He dies, Jesus utters His final cry, "*It is finished,*" and breathes out His last breath.

Peter observes all of this, knowing that he had denied Jesus. When Jesus needed him, he denied his dearest friend. This breaks Peter's heart. I wonder how Peter slept that night, and the next night, and the night after that.

Jesus is alive

On the morning of the third day, a woman comes running to the disciples, calling, "*Jesus is alive! Jesus is alive! The grave is empty, He has risen!*"

Who runs first? Peter. He wants to see for himself, because he wants to set things right with Jesus; he must apologise. He feels embarrassed about what he did. He cannot believe what he did.

Of course, he sees that the grave is empty. That evening, Jesus appears to all the disciples in person, but Peter dares not say anything to Jesus. He knows that Jesus knows he denied Him.

Jesus says to the disciples, "*Go to Galilee, I will meet you there.*" *He has an appointment with Peter.* Friends, perhaps Jesus has an appointment with you.

Galilee

They go to Galilee, and when they arrive there, Peter says to his fellow disciples, "*I am going fishing.*" He is a natural leader. Everyone follows him; they return to their old ways, from where Jesus had called them.

That night they catch nothing. At dawn the next morning, while they could barely recognise each other, Jesus appears on the shore. He calls to them in the boat, "*My children, have you caught anything?*"

They answer, "*No, nothing.*"

He calls back, "*Cast the net on the other side.*"

They cast the net out on the other side, and Wow! What a lot of fish!

John says to Peter, "*It is the Lord.*"

What does Peter do? He jumps into the water, he is naked. Why would he jump into the water? Friends, when you have been caught out, when you know you have done wrong, you *just want to hide*. It is the *mask* that is worn. You want to *hide away*. We sometimes hide away in church. We hide behind our good deeds. But God knows what our hearts look like; we cannot hide from Him.

Peter jumps into the water. The disciples slowly bring all the fish to shore, and they come to where Jesus is. Jesus

is grilling some fish on the fire. He speaks to everyone in general, *"Bring some of the fish that you caught."*

Who volunteers? Peter.

Peter is embarrassed. He is now face to face with Jesus. He doesn't know where to hide his face. *"I will go."*

And then the Bible tells us the strangest thing.

John 21:11 "Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three ..."

How do we know how many fish there were? Peter counted them. *"One ... two ... three ... four ... five ..."* he counts them. Jesus gives him time. He knows that Peter will eventually finish counting. After a while Peter returns with some fish. He is now seated across from Jesus and there is a deafening silence. Nobody speaks. Everyone is busy with his own thoughts. After a while, Jesus looks Peter in the eye and asks him,

Do you love Me?

John 21:15a "... Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?"

The word that He uses here for 'love', is '*agape*'. The kind of love that is willing to die, because just a few days previously Peter had said that he was willing to die for Jesus. Now Jesus asks him, *"Really, Peter, agape? Do you love Me like this?"*

Friends, for the first time Peter is absolutely honest. He cannot hide behind a mask anymore. He says,

John 21:15b
love You."

"... Yes, Lord; You know that I

However, Peter uses the word *'phileo'*, which is a lower form of love. *"I like You."* One might as well say, *"I like peanut butter."* That is the level of *'phileo'* love. Peter knows that he dares not say *'agape'*, because he knows that Jesus knows that he had denied Him. He cannot say that; he dares not say that. For the first time Peter is *brutally honest*. Friends, *honesty is the beginning of the restoration process*, as it was in the case of the prodigal son. *"I like You, Lord."*

Jesus says to him,

John 21:15c

"... Tend My lambs."

This is interesting, because *Jesus gives him responsibility for the bride of Christ*. Even though he denied Jesus, He still gives him the responsibility to feed His sheep. Again, there is silence, each one busy with his own thoughts. Peter can almost not believe what he hears. After a while Jesus breaks the silence again, looks Peter in the eyes,

John 21:16 *"'Simon, son of John, do you love Me (agape)? He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.'* (phileo – honesty, I like You). *He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.'"*

Again the responsibility. Again silence. A third time Jesus says:

John 21:17
Me?"

"... Simon, son of John, do you love

What is interesting here, is that this time Jesus uses the same word for love that Peter used, *'phileo'*. He comes down to Peter's level, because He sees that Peter cannot go up to Him. This is typical of Jesus; He comes down to our level. Where you cannot do it, where you cannot create a new heart for yourself, Jesus meets you where you are. He dies for you. He gives His life for you. He comes down to my level and to your level, to our level, *'Phileo'* – do you like Me? It breaks Peter that He asks this for a third time, especially because He uses the word *'phileo'*. And he says to Him,

John 21:17b "... Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You."

In other words, he says, *"Your look penetrates me. Your love penetrates me. Nothing is hidden. You know my past; You know about everything that I have done, and yet You still love me. It blows my mind. But I thank You for that."*

When Jesus came to live on earth as a Man, and to die for us, He stooped down to our level. He came down to our level on the cross of Calvary. When we cannot go to Him through our good deeds or religion, He comes down to us. He penetrates us with His love, His look of love.

Then He says something very interesting to Peter:

John 21:18 "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished (typical young man, arrogant, don't tell me what to do or how to live my life); but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands,

and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.'

John 21:19 *"Now He said this, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, 'Follow Me.'"*

In other words, He is telling Peter, *"Peter, you will agape Me. You will die yet for Me; but not in your own strength. I will take you by the hand and lift you up to where you cannot go in your own strength."*

Friends, Jesus offers the same for you and me. We cannot save ourselves by our own good deeds and religion - we need Jesus. We need honesty in our innermost being, where we can acknowledge, *"Lord, I cannot do this in my own strength. I cannot get myself out of this mess. I ask You to create in me a clean heart, a new heart. Take me by the hand and lead me where I cannot go. My heart is broken. I ask forgiveness for my sins. Father, create in me a pure heart, forgive my sins. Restored my broken heart please Lord."*

May the Lord help you to be *honest in your heart* toward Jesus, and to come just as you are, because that is how He desires you. He is the one who will lift you up.

May the Lord bless you.

Henry Jackson