

The heart of man

Part 3

I often talk about the heart, and today I would like to share another aspect of the theme of the heart with you. Let's begin with a Scripture which I often used at the beginning of the series.

Matt 12:33 "Either make the tree good, and its fruit good; or make the tree bad, and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit."

How do we know that a tree is an apple tree? We notice that the tree bears apples. A pear tree brings forth pears. What flows out of a person's mouth is the fruit of what goes on deep inside his/her heart.

*12:34 "You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? **For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.**"*

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."

The tongue is like the rudder of a ship

Therefore, that which is inside the heart, will be coming out of the mouth. In James 3, James compares the tongue to the rudder of a ship. Even when the ship sails into great waves and stormy seas, where it gets blown to and fro by strong winds, it is still the small rudder which gives it direction; that rudder is our tongue. Our

tongue speaks what is inside the heart, and what is inside the heart started out as a tiny seed which was at one time planted there. That is why we need to be careful what we plant in the heart.

In this passage in Matthew, Jesus speaks about the *treasure* of the heart. A treasure is something that one stores away safely. We must be careful what we store in our hearts.

Earlier in the book of Matthew, Jesus also alludes to a treasure ...

Matt 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.

6:20 "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.

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

There is an essential connection between the treasure and the heart. In this passage, Jesus speaks of something that one does purposefully – we gather treasures – and we must be careful what treasures we gather.

What you sow, you reap

Let's take a look at what Paul says about this in the book of Galatians:

Gal 6:7 "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

6:8 "For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life."

This treasure is therefore likened to something that we sow. It is seed that we sow in our lives. It is something that we do purposefully. We either sow good seed, or bad seed. The seed that we sow, will grow. We may have sown one tiny seed, but that seed will grow and eventually become a plant that produces many seeds. Those seeds will multiply again and again. What we sow, we will reap. And what we reap is always MUCH more than that which we sowed.

People usually quote this Scripture as a warning of the negative, *"What you sow, you will reap."* However, there is also a positive aspect to this. If we want to reap a good harvest, then we must sow good seed, and the good seed must be sown into our hearts at a time while it is still just a little seed.

A life-decision as a teenage boy

As a teenage boy I attended Milton High School in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, where I also resided in the hostel. When I was about 16 years old, there was another boy in my age group who was rude; he used bad language and annoyed everyone around him. I often got angry with this uncouth young man. One day he made me so angry that I decided I had had enough, and that I would swear at him the next time he did that to me. However, I was not someone who swore. My upbringing taught me

that one simply did not do that. Nevertheless, I decided that I would swear at him if ever he treated me badly again.

And so, it happened soon thereafter that he made me angry again, and I swore at him. I used the most terrible swear words! Can you imagine what the result of my action was? I was shocked! To my utter surprise this guy never even realised that I had sworn at him. He was so used to using bad language that he never even noticed it when I uttered those foul words.

I was embarrassed at myself for the filth that I had allowed to flow out of my mouth, and right there, as a 16-year old, I decided that I would not lower myself to that boy's standards, or anyone else for that matter. I decided that I would always only use good language, because that is who I am, and that I would not lower myself to worldly standards.

Since that day, I have not used swear words. I don't sow those things in my heart; and because I have not sown those kinds of seeds in my heart since childhood, those words don't come out of my mouth – not even when I am under pressure. The good things that I plant in my heart, are what come out of my mouth and give direction to my life. I learnt an important life-lesson that day.

We should be careful what we sow into our hearts, because when we find ourselves under pressure, that which we have sown will certainly flow out of our mouth – good or bad.

Watch over your heart

There is an interesting passage in Proverbs.

Prov 4:23 "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life."

What a beautiful verse – *"Watch over your heart."* There are many passages in Scripture that speak of the heart; Psalm 1 is one such passage. In this Psalm, David speaks about the places in which he spends time, and the places which he specifically avoids.

He does not keep company with mockers and corrupt people. Instead, he spends time in the Word. And this is what I also deliberately sow in my own life – my heart. I sow the Word. I spend time in the Word, and that which I purposefully spend time on, is who I become. Such a person is like a tree planted next to living waters; he bears fruit throughout the year. His leaves never wither because his roots are firmly planted by a river of life-giving water.

This is what happens when we plant the Word of truth in our lives. Because we plant the Word into our heart, we bear fruit - good fruit - continually. What proceeds from our mouths then, is the proof of the good treasure that was planted as seeds into our hearts.

"Watch over your heart ..."

Be careful what you put in there. Take heed what you sow in your heart,

"... with all diligence."

This is therefore a primary element; it should be our top priority. What you do with your heart is crucial, how you guard your heart; because from your heart flow the springs of life – the origin of life. If you truly desire a life of abundance and victory, then it is vital that you heed what you plant in your heart; be aware of what kind of seed you sow in your heart.

The Law is LIFE

The passages containing these principles are found throughout the Scriptures – from Genesis to Revelation. When I discovered these things, I didn't realise that the Bible had so much to say about the heart. God gives Moses the Law in Deuteronomy. People generally think that the Law brings bondage. However, it is the Law that gives, and teaches about life. In Deuteronomy, God often says, *"If you keep My laws, you will live. You will live as a nation."* This is one of those passages:

Deut 4:9 "Only give heed to yourself ..."

Isn't this interesting: *"Only give heed to yourself."* In other words, be careful what you do with your heart.

4:9 "... lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons."

One notices this constant reference back to the past as we read the stories of the Bible. Hebrews chapter 11, for example, reminds us of various men and women of faith; what they did, how they trusted God and what happened in their lives. Those stories serve as *memorials* for us,

our children and our grandchildren. We must continually talk about those past victories and heroic acts of faith; they should be planted into our hearts; and pour out of our hearts through our mouths as truthful words and precious memories.

"This is what the Lord did; this is how He helped David and Samuel and Daniel in difficult times ..."

The more we talk about the Bible stories, the more we confirm the truths they contain - the truth that we can trust the Lord. That is the seed of truth from which our faith grows. If God did it for these heroes of faith from the Bible times, then He can surely do it for me too. That is the seed which we should sow into our hearts, the memorials. Let me read it again:

"Only give heed to yourself, lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen ..."

Remember the great stories of faith in the Bible

Do not forget it. Keep it constantly in front of your eyes; keep the memorials of the Lord's goodness in your heart constantly. Remember the power of the Lord and how He helped Israel through difficult times, and how He helped various individuals, such as David and Daniel and all the heroes of faith as mentioned in Hebrews 11 and other passages. At the end of Hebrews 11, He says,

Heb 11:32 "And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets."

This passage tells me that there is an abundance of great testimonies available. We must search for them, read them and meditate upon them. I will always be grateful to my mother. When I was a child, she sat at my bedside every morning and evening and read me the stories of the Bible. I often asked her to read them again and again. She established those stories within my heart. She sowed memorials of truth in my spirit. These precious seeds grew into the tree which I have now grown up to become.

Sow

I would like to encourage you. Sow. *Only give heed to yourself what you sow*, not only in your own heart, but also the hearts of your children and grandchildren. Be careful that you consistently and diligently speak about the truth, as well as the stories of faith, the stories about the goodness of the Lord. We must *be careful what we sow into our hearts* – for ourselves, our children and our grandchildren. A seed may be an insignificant, tiny little thing, but *eventually it becomes a great tree*.

Become a tall tree

Years ago in Zimbabwe, we were travelling to my brother's farm in the Gutu district to pay him and his family a visit. We were driving on the Enkeldoorn/Gutu road. Approximately halfway between the two towns, a long ridge stretched right across the horizon. The road couldn't go around it, it had to go over it.

From a long distance I noticed a huge Eucalyptus tree right at the top of the highest point of the ridge. I

marvelled at this tree as I appreciated that this tree caught the full force of every wind blowing from all directions. There was no shelter for this poor tree. While I was wondering and marvelling about this, the Holy Spirit spoke to me. He asked me,

"If a traveller lost his way, what would he use as his direction indicator?"

I answered that he would use that huge tree, of course, because that tree could be seen from afar. The Holy Spirit then told me that if I wanted to be a tall tree like that, I would need to *be prepared to handle the strong winds of criticism and opposition* that would come my way. That is part of the calling of a leader – a direction indicator, *able to remain standing strong no matter the fierceness of the winds of opposition ...*

Isaiah 61 speaks of God calling us to be *great oaks of righteousness*. However, a big tree does not begin as a big tree. Those great oaks of righteousness started as *small seeds of righteousness* – doing the right and honest thing when no one is looking. We have the privilege and responsibility to take those insignificant little seeds of righteousness (to do the right thing) and truth, and plant them in our hearts, and in the hearts of our children and grandchildren. It is those insignificant little seeds which will grow; they are the ones who will eventually become those marvellously strong and magnificent oaks, *giving shelter to so many*.

May the Lord help each of us to sow good things into our hearts at the seemingly insignificant times, so that we will become great direction indicating trees of righteousness.

I would like to pray for you.

Dear Lord, thank You for Your Word - Your wonderful Word - that contains so much power and truth. We believe Your Word and we want to give heed to ourselves to remind ourselves of the truths of Your Word. Will You please help us, oh Lord, to sow those truths continually into our lives, and into the lives of our children and grandchildren.

I ask, Lord, that these seeds will grow into big trees. Will You please help each one of us, and may those little seeds that constantly drink from the living water of Your Word, grow bigger and bigger until they are great oaks of righteousness; may they become sturdy trees that will be immovable; trees that will stand firmly for what is right.

Bless us all, dear Lord. We ask this in Your Name.

Amen.

Henry D Jackson