

THE HEART

There is an affliction common to all mankind. It can be so severe that it may cut our life short. On the other hand, with appropriate intervention, we might live a long and fruitful life. What affliction am I talking about—it's a heart condition.

When I first said heart condition, you might have thought of faulty heart valves or angina or congestive heart failure or even possibly cardiac arrest. Those certainly are dangerous heart conditions, but they are ailments of the physical heart. What I am talking about is a spiritual heart condition—let's name it "closed heart disorder".

What is the condition of our heart?

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees because they masked their true hearts and feelings. He accused them of being nothing more than religious pretenders—actors who outwardly proclaimed faith in God, but inwardly they were far from Him.

Matthew 15:8: "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me".

In Matthew 23, Jesus told the people to obey the Pharisees because they sat in Moses's seat, but He cautioned them to not do as the Pharisees did because they were hypocrites.

Matthew 23:1-4: "Then Jesus spoke to the multitudes and to His disciples, saying: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses's seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers".

Matthew 23:25-28: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of

extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness”.

The Pharisees thought their religious acts made them pure, but they were wrong. If we think that our religious acts make us pure, then we're wrong too. Jesus saw through their pettiness and pretense and looked right into their hearts...just as He can see into ours.

1 Samuel 16:7: “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart”.

Did you know that, when God looks at us, He is not looking at our outward appearance? That might be hard to hear because some of us spend a lot of time on how we look. Ultimately, this doesn't matter to God—He looks past what we look like and how we behave to focus in on our heart because that shows who we truly are.

Proverbs 21:2: “All a man's ways seem right to him, but the Lord weighs the heart”.

The word heart (*kardia* in the Greek) is used to signify the inner person. The heart is the control center of a person's mind, emotions and will. It is our invisible innermost being that shapes our lives, our attitudes, our convictions and, ultimately, our actions.

Proverbs 27:19: “As water reflects a face, so a man's heart reflects the man”.

Psalms 4:23: “Above all else, guard your heart, for it affects everything you do”.

The heart is like a freeway cloverleaf where all emotions and prejudices and wisdom converge. It's a switch station that receives freight cars loaded with moods, emotions, and convictions and puts them on the right track...or not!

Jeremiah 17:9-10: "The heart is deceitfully wicked above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve".

God inspired Jeremiah to say that the heart is desperately wicked and beyond cure—it is terminally diseased. The heart is so sick that no medication can heal it. Someone once said that we are suffering from only one disease in the world. Our basic problem isn't a race problem. Our basic problem isn't a poverty problem. Our basic problem isn't a war problem. Our basic problem is a heart problem.

We can make whatever excuses we wish to protect our pet sins and carnal attitudes; the self-centeredness that's solely consumed with what we want and think we deserve. Not one of them will stand up in the face of God's holiness. God will never accept anything less than total purity within you and me.

Our heart condition sounds deadly, doesn't it? Thankfully, God has a plan for our spiritual malady.

Ezekiel 36:26: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh". Modern medicine can do open heart surgery, but God performs "closed heart surgery" on us. What a blessing for us that He doesn't have to open us up with a scalpel—He puts His incredibly powerful spirit in us and begins to break up and remove our old stony heart so He can replace it with a heart of flesh that is open to Him and

His way of life.

Someone who has open heart surgery probably feels like they have a new lease on life—physically. After God operates on us, we have a new lease on life spiritually.

II Corinthians 5:17: “If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old is gone, behold, all things become new”.