

THE HEART –

Proverbs 4:23

Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it flows life.

The Bible tells us that the heart is the seat of all actions of life. It is said that “The Heart is used in Scripture as a term for the real person. It is the part of our being where we desire, deliberate, and decide. We see it as "the place of conscious and decisive spiritual activity." We see it as "the person as a whole; his feelings, desires, passions, thought, understanding and will." We see it as "the center of a person - the seat of our intellect and imagination. We need to look at this heart of ours as we consider the three subjects of salvation, sanctification, and service. They are all a matter of the heart.

First Salvation is a matter of the heart.

The Heart of Man is also the source of man’s lowest thoughts.

Jeremiah 17:9

“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; who can know it?”

Proverbs 23:7

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. “

Psalm 51:10 David said

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Scientists have discovered that every snowflake has a tiny piece of dust at its core. Yes, every snowflake has a "dirty heart"

Romans 10:9-10

“that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Jeremiah 29:13

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.”

Mark 7:6

“Jesus answered and said to them, "Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: 'This people honors Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.'”

Being a Believer is far more than head knowledge of Jesus. A true Believer is an unsaved human being saved.. Some people who think they are saved are not. Why? Jesus is not in their hearts. They believe in their heads, but not in their hearts. They are missing salvation by 18 inches (the distance from a man's heart to his brain).

I heard that saying years ago.

Luke 6:43-45

Jesus said; "For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

45 "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

We are known by our fruit. We should be willing and able to assess our own spiritual condition by examining our own fruit and: By continuing self-examination of our spiritual life. We are to look for fruit in our own lives.

What is our life producing?

What better mirror to help us examine ourselves than in the Bible?

James 1:22-25 says; But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

We know we need biblical self-evaluation for our self-inspection.

So: If our self-inspection reveals no good fruit or very little good fruit, then we have a problem. Don't we?

Matthew 7:17 "Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. (the Lake of Fire.)

20 "Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Fruit that is good reveals a good heart. Fruit that is bad reveals a bad heart.

Jesus hereby makes the point that good fruit, such as love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, and self-control come from a heart that has been changed by God.

What is the condition of our heart? Your heart and mine. This is a question for all of us who have experienced God's love and also for those who are in need of a right relationship with God.

So we see what we do every day matters.

Our lives give daily evidence that shows whether we are living in a daily relationship with Jesus.

The fruit does not determine the tree. The tree determines the fruit. Our daily actions do not determine our heart's condition or our life's direction, but our heart's condition determines our daily actions.

The words we say are never meaningless. The words have meaning, and there is a reason behind the words we use. Of all the actions or activities that Jesus could have used to explain this point, He used the tongue. Our deeds, our thoughts, and our attitudes are all a part of our daily actions, but our words most often reveal our true character. Someone once said it like this, "Your daily conversation, your words, comes from our heart.

Your actions, especially your words flow out of your heart. What do your actions and words reveal about your heart? .

We truly need biblical self-evaluation and self-inspection.

Next; Sanctification is a matter of the heart too.

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 – actors! 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.”

Isaiah 29:13

Therefore the Lord said: "Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,”

There was a man many years ago who talked about the blessing of the Almighty God and the forgiveness of sin, that man would become the head of a new government. He had the look of earnestness. He handed out pious stories to the press, especially to church papers. He showed his tattered Bible and declared that he drew his strength for his great work from it and scores of religious people welcomed him as a man sent from God. Who was that man? Well, Adolf Hitler was a master of outward religiosity—with no inward reality! -.

For true sanctification begins inside out.

Daniel 1:8

“But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.”

1 Peter 3:15

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;”

We grieve the spirit by failing to keep our hearts clean. We saw what David said, ,
 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
 Be cleansed, That is exactly what God wishes to do for us and will do. This is our secret of victory over sin. --

Next; Service is a matter of the heart.

It's not the “What” in our service but the “Why” in our service.

Matthew 23:5 says;

“But all their works they do to be seen by men.

Matthew 6:5

““And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.”

I heard a story about a man one time who had a mouse in his house and his wife desperately wanted him to catch it. His problem was that he didn't have any cheese. So he cut a picture of cheese out of a magazine and placed it in the trap. He thought, "I'll just fool the mouse." When he looked at the trap the next morning to see if he had caught the mouse he found a beautiful mouse in the trap. There was only one problem. It was a picture of a mouse. Counterfeit people who use counterfeit tactics will always produce counterfeit results!

Serving from the heart is the only service God recognizes.

Colossians 3:23

“And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men.”

As Believers we should do all things wholeheartedly, not just those actions that can be seen., “As our Father makes many a flower to bloom unseen in the lonely

desert, [let us] do all that we can do, as under His eye, though no other eye ever sees you.”

Deuteronomy 10:12

““And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

There is a characteristic of service that is focused more upon ourselves than service focused more upon Christ.

Self-focused service is concerned about impressive gains. It enjoys serving when the service is titanic or growing in that direction. Christ-focused service doesn't distinguish between a small or large service. It indiscriminately welcomes all opportunities to serve. Self-focused service requires external reward, appreciation, and applause. Christ-focused service is not openly visible.

God's nod of approval is sufficient. Self-focused service is highly concerned about results. It becomes disillusioned when results fall below expectations. Christ-focused service is free of the need to calculate results; it delights only in service. Self-focused service is affected by feelings.

Christ-focused servants serve simply and faithfully because there is a need. The service determines the feelings. Self-focused service demands the opportunity to help. Christ-focused service listens with tenderness and patience. It can serve by waiting in silence.

This list of things could offer a way to refocus our blurred image of Christ in our serving Him.

Ephesians 6:6 says

6 not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart,

A true story is told of a banquet where a famous religious leader found himself seated next to an extremely beautiful woman who was wearing a gown that had a

very very low neckline. He introduced himself to her... and then offered her an apple.

She was a little surprised, but he explained with a smile,

"Please do take it, Madame. It was only after Eve ate the fruit that she became aware of how little she had on."

Someone could ask:

Why was it, that after Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, the first thing they noticed was that they were naked?

Weren't they always naked?

Well, sure. It had to be so.

But before they ate the fruit of the tree they didn't think about it.

They were innocent. Their hearts were pure.

Genesis 2:25

says "The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame"

Have you ever noticed little children particularly in the summer time? When they'll strip off all their clothes and run naked across the yard. Have you ever seen them do that? I have a four year old granddaughter that loves to run around the house naked as a jaybird.

Little children are not worried about being naked. They have no shame.

But why?

A Bible commentator once said: " A two-year-old doesn't see any difference between (their) face, (their) knees, and the parts of (their) body which we adults insist that (they) cover up. Only adults feel that certain parts of the body must be covered. Because those parts could be connected with physical lust and passions."

You see, before Adam and Eve ate of the fruit, their hearts were pure.

"Their nakedness was innocent and in no way sinful.

They saw no difference between a hand, whose purpose was to do good deeds, a mouth with which one praises God and says kind words to others and the parts of the body which are used to ‘be fruitful and multiply.’ With every organ they could fulfill the will of God or vice versa. So no organ was shameful, nor did anything need to be covered.”

But once they ate of the fruit... that all changed.

Their hearts were now tainted with sinful thoughts they’d never had before.

Matthew 15:19

Jesus said: “... out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.”

So you see, there were no evil thoughts inside them until they ate of the fruit.

But after they’d eaten, the knowledge they gained... shamed them.

And worse than that, their new-found knowledge separated them from God. God’s final punishment upon Adam and Eve was for them to leave His presence:

Genesis 3:24

“(God) drove out the man, and at the east of the Garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

God kicked them out!!! He evicted them from their wonderful home.

Genesis 3:7

tells us that “...they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.”

You know I’ve seen a lot of leaves, of various shapes and sizes, but I have yet to see any leaf that I’d feel very comfortable wearing out in public. And apparently, these leaves didn’t do much more for Adam and Eve.

When God came walking in the Garden in the cool of the day they hide themselves. And when God calls out and asks Adam where are you Adam replies:

"I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because i was naked; so I hid."

That's Genesis 3:10

Think about that! Up until that very moment they thought their fig leaves were doing the job. But suddenly the leaves leave them feeling naked. When did Adam realize his fig leaves weren't doing the job? (when they came into God's presence)

It was when Adam found himself in God's presence that he began to realize his man-made coverings weren't enough.

Nakedness has been the symbol of our sinfulness ever since the garden.

Whenever a person's sins are discovered, we say they have been exposed.

Jesus warns us not to be found "naked and exposed" when He comes again.

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed."

We see this don't we?. They know their own nakedness... they know their own sin/shame personally. Example of this; Some people living their lives today in comfort, working out in the garden, doing things around the house, being at work and suddenly it hits them out of the blue: a thought will overwhelm them reminding them of something they'd said, done or thought in the past that brings a sudden wave of shame over their lives.

Robert Louis Stevenson, the famous author, wrote "All of us have thoughts that would shame Hell."

People know their own nakedness.

They just don't want anyone else knowing about it... and so they try to cover that nakedness.

When you think about it; there are at least 3 different ways people try to hide their nakedness:

They try comparing their nakedness to someone else's nakedness... maybe Adam said to Eve, "My fig leaves cover up more of my nakedness than yours do!!!"

Or they'll try hanging out with all the right people – looking righteous.

Then there are others who will skip the religious clothing and just try to get by on their good works.

Sometime in yesteryear; there was a famous billionaire who'd just made a very generous donation to a charity and jokingly said that he'd heard that you couldn't buy your way into heaven, but by my gracious donation it was a good down payment on a place there.

Now what's interesting about that is some people will do anything they can to avoid getting too close to God. Because once they get too close to God their nakedness becomes obvious.

How could I know if I am one of those people? How would I know if I'm the one who's trying to get by, by covering up my sin? How do I know that? How do I know if I'm the one trying to avoid God so my sins won't be exposed?

You see, I'm as prone as any of us might be to deceive myself into thinking I've got my sins covered because I did this or I did that. So, how would I know if I've fooled myself?

The heart lets me know.

The most obvious people, hiding their nakedness, are the ones who say "I can stay home and be a Christian." I can love God by myself.. I would say these people need the love of God's children in fellowship with Christ. They think they're good enough as they are. Their fig leaves are just fine, thank you.

But it's more difficult to spot exposed people who "show up regularly at church activities.

There was this group of people that were highly religious, they were regulars at worship. They held positions of prominence in the congregation. They prayed often, they fasted often, they tithed of everything. Jesus spoke about these people often.

You remember who these highly religious people were? (they are Pharisees)

Jesus told us a parable to help us understand how naked these men were:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself:

‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men— robbers, evildoers, adulterers— or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’

"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

"Jesus said I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”

The Pharisee stood before God and essentially told God how lucky He was to have him a Pharisee in His church. He reminded God of how he was far better than the robbers, evildoers, adulterers... and even this tax-collector.

Then just, in case God missed his point, the Pharisee reminded God of his righteous deeds. Yes sir. God was mighty lucky to have him. His fig leaves were all properly in place.

Meanwhile, the tax-collector was standing before God... and he didn't feel worthy to even raise his eyes to heaven. He didn't have anything to brag about. He didn't come to praise himself but to seek God's mercy. He realized that – in God's presence – he was as naked as a jaybird before Him) .

That's the man we need to imitate.

We know we've acknowledged our nakedness when we view being in the body of Christ as a blessing. Being in the body of Christ is a privilege. When we think how blessed we are that God not only lets us be a part of His body... but that He lets us live. When we realize how honored we are to have received His love and mercy and His word. And when we think about it every day how blessed we are.

That's how we know that we're not one of those people who try to hide behind their fig leaves... because in being like the tax collector we realize we don't have any fig leaves to hide behind.

So the 1st intriguing thing about the story of Adam and Eve was that they already had clothes, they just weren't very good clothes because they were man-made.

The 2nd thing that's intriguing here is that God supplied their clothing.

He gave them clothing that He had made for them.

God did it all – they did nothing.

All they did was put the clothes on.

Something else that was intriguing was the kind of clothing God supplied.

What kind of garments were these that God gave them? (Animal skins)

Genesis 3:21

says “The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.”

They were garments of skin?

Now how would God get garments of skin from an animal?)

And how do you get skin off an animal? (The animal has to die)

When God killed these animals to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness this could have been the beginning of animal sacrifices. Animal sacrifices were made throughout the Old Testament to pay for sin.

God's commandments repeatedly taught the Israelites that every sin that they committed was punishable by death. But since everyone sinned, God allowed them to cover their sins by offering up a sacrifice of a pure and spotless animal in their place.

Hebrews 9:22

tells us "... the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

Leviticus 17:11

taught "...the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life."

In order for God to give mankind forgiveness... something had to die.

But why would God have an animal die for Adam and Eve?

Well, God had created the animals for them.

How many of us have pets? How many of you really love those pets? They become like members of the family.

Imagine being Adam and Eve in the garden. Imagine being down by the stream and having fish nibbling unafraid at your toes because they want to play with you? Or sitting beside a tree with a lion or leopard resting its massive head in your lap wanting you to stroke it and comfort them.

These animals were Adam and Eve's constant companions. They were like pets to the first couple. All the animals in the garden were gentle and loving... and loved by Adam and Eve.

And one of these gentle companions had to die to cover their nakedness.

Throughout the Old Testament God drove home how terrible sin was. Every time a child of God sinned, they were required to offer up a blood sacrifice. In the days of the tabernacle you'd see people lined up at the gate with their sacrifices being offered for things they had done.

Day, after day, after day sacrifices were offered up to God. And these sacrifices cost the life, and the blood, of an innocent animal to pay for their sins.

A price had to be paid.

And blood was the dearest price that could be paid. The man that died, sacrificed for us was God.

Lastly, the animals that God used to make Adam and Eve's garments were the 1st deaths on earth. Nothing else had ever died before this that we know of.

And these creatures died at God's hand.

They could literally have been the first sacrifices ever made in man's history.

Someone once said that God made the first and the last sacrifice for man's sins.

Here in the Garden of Eden, God sacrificed the first innocent animal to cover sin.

And it was on Golgotha that God made the last sacrifice of His sinless son to cover our sin.

In the Garden, God supplied Adam and Eve with garments to cover their nakedness.

And on Golgotha He supplied us with our garment to cover our nakedness.

His gift to them involved the death of an innocent animal.

His gift to us was the gift of His son... a pure and spotless offering to cover our nakedness

Genesis tells us that God sacrificed those first animals to cover man's nakedness.

But how does God cover our nakedness in the sacrifice of Christ?

That answer is found in Galatians 3:27

“for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.”

When we were buried in the waters of baptism we were literally wrapped in Jesus. His righteousness covers us like a garment. And that – of course – was the genius of God's design, for when we go down into the waters of baptism we are literally wrapped in the waters, covered as in a garment.

But the garment we receive through Jesus Christ was far better than the ones that Adam and Eve were given.

Their garments would eventually wear out would eventually be torn and stained and would ultimately become shabby and not worth wearing.

But worse than that... the garments God made for Adam and Eve would never allow them back into God's presence. No matter how long they wore them, they'd never be allowed to re-enter the beautiful Garden He had prepared for their home.

But when you and I put on Jesus that all changed.

Hebrews 10:14-23

"... by one sacrifice (Jesus) has made perfect forever those who are being made holy... Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more..."

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful."

Unlike Adam and Eve, the garment Jesus supplied us with gives us the privilege of boldly coming into God's presence and enjoying His love and compassion personally.

One last thought: Did Adam and Eve deserve the garments God made for them?

Of course not!

And in the same way, we don't deserve the garment that covers our sins either.

A little story of a man we'll call Jack Thomas. This story I understand is true.

Jack wrote in a letter; "My father had died during my senior year in high school, and my mother had become blind. With her encouragement "I enrolled in the University on the eve of the Great Depression.

By night I was a part time taxi driver, and during the lunch and dinner hours I waited tables in a campus dining hall. I made enough money to pay my expenses, but I had to always pinch pennies.

At lunch one day I was serving a table where faculty members were seated. As I returned to the table with my tray held high, the unthinkable happened! I slipped on a spot of gravy that was on the floor and watched helplessly as the plates slid off the tray, one by one, spilling onto an especially well-dressed man... one of my professors.

My heart sank. What could I do?

I grabbed a towel to clean up the food, but I only spread the mess over more of my professor's suit.

He locked his eyes on me and asked, "Young man, what are you going to do about this?"

"I'm so sorry sir. I'll pay to have your suit cleaned," I responded.

"I don't believe this suit can be dry cleaned, do you?" my professor countered.

It was badly stained. I could tell that. And who was I to question his judgment?

He had every right to be irritated. "Whatever it takes, sir." I answered humbly.

Later that afternoon I sat before the same professor in his engineering class as he did his best to present his normal lecture in something less than what he was used to wearing for his lectures. When the bell rang I heard the dreaded words:

"Mr. Thomas, I'd like to speak to you for a moment."

After everyone had left, he said, "Young man, I believe it is only fair that you buy me a new suit."

"Yes, sir," I managed to say.

With a knot in my stomach, I agreed to meet him at a Columbus men's store the following day. I recognized the name of the store, an exclusive men's clothier specializing in custom-tailored suits. I also knew that I could cover the expenses only if I were able to make payments over several months of work and scrimping. As I walked in the front door of the finely furnished store, I grew even more apprehensive.

"Oh there you are," my professor remarked.

He had arrived early. He had already chosen the fabric and the tailor had already taken measurements. My professor, a regular customer, had apparently vouched for my trustworthiness because the clerk nonchalantly accepted the professor's remark,

"Mr. Thomas here will be responsible for the bill, as I have indicated."

I don't know what I can do without, but I know I can, because I have to.

More than a little disorientated, I turned to follow my professor out of the door. Then he stopped.

"Are you sure you want to do this?" he asked me.

"Yes sir," I responded. "It will take time, of course, but I..."

He interrupted me with words directed to the clerk.

"Let's see that this young man is fitted for a suit just like mine. And put them both on my bill."

Not only was my debt canceled, but I received what I did not deserve. And my benefactor provided me with more than a suit and an indelible memory. He showed me an example of a man's good heart. A heart we could imitate.

It's what our heart should be like.

1 John 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?