

Heart Problems

I am sure just about everyone has been troubled, saddened, and outraged at the events of the last two weeks.

First the video of George Floyd, a black man, being held down by a white police officer. Floyd had a knee on his throat and could be heard saying, "I can't breathe." He died after being held down in such a fashion for about 8 minutes. Everyone condemned the actions of the officers involved and at least one was charged with second degree murder.

Second, the protest which turned into a riot. Businesses were destroyed, merchandise stolen, and more lives were lost. Some were innocent bystanders in the wrong place at the wrong time, store owners tried to protect their places of businesses, and police officers tried to restore order.

I don't know how this is going to end but I do know our country has a serious heart problem. By heart I am speaking of the Bible heart which involves how we think, what we desire, and how we feel.

The heart of some is aimed at pleasing the world and those have a dirty heart. Much like the scribes and Pharisees in Jesus' day as they speak words of love and peace but inwardly are full of hatred and malice. **"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."** (Matthew 23:27-28). Some actions are not guided by what is right but what can one get by with. Can I get by with sleeping with my neighbor's wife? Can I get by with stealing and looting? Can I get by with lying? Obviously being a part of a larger group doing the same things emboldens people because the probability of getting caught is small. This is dirty and worldly thinking.

Other heart problems are what based on desire. In the case of the riots after George Lloyd's death, I am sure they were based on outrage at the social injustice. The desire is to "make things right" by using force to seek revenge.

People are upset because of past incidents involving black people dying at the hands of police and they want to get everyone's attention. However, vengeance is not ours to get. **Hebrews 10:30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people."** Many people have hearts full of hatred.

Still others have no sense of empathy for others. I wonder how a man can kneel on the throat of another person, hear his cry for help, and not spare his life? I also wonder how some one can abort their own baby, how a parent can abuse their child, and how a person can hate another human being just because of their skin color? They are without natural affection as mentioned in Romans 1.31.

What is the solution to these heart problems? First, we must recognize and treat the problem and not just the symptom. I do just mean we need to be good and try to get along but we need to understand it begins with each person.

We need to change the way we think and how we think. **"Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth." (Colossians 3:2).** This is an unnatural way of thinking because it means placing God and His will first. One example is to love our enemies. **Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?** How many people seek to do what is best for those they hate? It is a hard task and requires us to view life from a different prism. One way to doing this is to look to the example of Jesus as He died for those who were enemies of God.

Change what we want and make it more about what God desires. This begs the question, 'What does God want?' He wants us to draw near to Him,

James 4.8. Instead of wondering what we can get by with, replace the thought with “How close can I get to God by being godly?” God wants us to be “holy vessels” 1 Thessalonians 4.3. One way we do that is by abstaining from sexual immorality. God wants us to obey His Son and do good works.

We must also correct our heart problem by changing the way we feel. As the Psalmist says we need to “delight in the Law of the Lord” (Psalm 1.2). We need to find comfort in God’s word, Psalm 119.50. We need to love our fellow man as God loves us, Matthew 19.19.

We are responsible for the condition of our heart. One heart problem is not recognizing we have a problem. We might think we are doing just fine but be on the verge of a heart attack. We must pay attention to how we think, what we desire, and how we feel. By feeding ourselves with His sound doctrine we can have a healthy heart. – Dennis Tucker