



***the mouth speaks***

Matthew 12:34

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### **1. THE HEART IS THE SEAT OF OUR BEING, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY.**

Why did we decide to write on this topic and illustrate it with such a strange cover? It looks like this heart is full of bombast and wind, spouting just hot air, maybe hoping to impress the hearer. It has suffered some hurt and damage which is just roughly and temporarily patched up. It also looks like its owner is trying to prove that he or she knows a lot. Most people confidently like to advertise themselves as competent and good people who try to do the right thing, and members of the church are no different. In recent days some have been accused as hypocrites because they say what they hope people will believe, but have been proven to not live up to their proclaimed

standards. For some (maybe good) reason those who profess to be Christians are expected to have a higher standard. It is apparently OK if you are a sinner to have impure thoughts and actions. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death".

(Proverbs 14:12) "From within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts"...

(Mark 7:20)

Since many people are like this the Bible has a lot to say about the heart. For example it says, "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure". (Jeremiah 17:9) In the written context Jeremiah is speaking for the Lord, comparing those who trust in man against those who trust in the Lord. (Jeremiah 17:5-8) We imagine that holding an opinion makes us right, and excuses our own shortcomings, but we expect others to meet our standards. "People have stubborn and rebellious hearts". (Jeremiah 5:23)

God wants to explain to us the problem in His Word. "No one is righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away...there is no one who does good, not even one". (Romans 3:12 and Psalm 14:2&3)

We reveal what is in our heart when we speak, and if what is coming out of our mouth is unsavoury and makes us feel ashamed then we need a new heart. "The mouth of the wicked gushes evil".

(Proverbs 15:28) Perhaps this frankness about the state of the human heart is what causes people to reject the Bible, while at the same time acknowledging that "some" of what is written is good. But picking and choosing what we agree with and what we do not makes God out to be a liar, when in actual fact it is us who are not speaking the truth.

There is a very interesting proverb which has been interpreted to suit the speaker like this. "As he thinks in his heart, so he is". If we do not read on, this statement can be interpreted as – just tell people what you want them to think and they will believe you, whether it is the truth or not. But the second part of this proverb – "As one who reckons, he says to you, eat and drink, yet his heart is not with you but is grudging the cost", (Proverbs 23:7 Amplified) shows that this sort of behaviour is not to be trusted and that the heart is not in line with the mouth. "By their fruit you will recognise them". (Matthew 7:16)

God's Word shows that God does not tolerate this hypocrisy and regards it as evil. "Men of perverse heart shall be far from me; I will have nothing to do with evil". (Psalm 101:4) "Haughty eyes and a proud heart...are sin. (Proverbs 21:4)

The fact that people do not want to acknowledge God and have turned to their own understanding is the great problem in the world. If everyone is doing what they feel in their hearts is right and "blowing their own trumpets" about themselves, there is an inevitable clash about what is right and what is wrong. The strongly opinionated will bully the weak into submission even if the weak do not agree. Paul teaches that we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. (Romans 15:1)

Jesus spoke gently to everyone He met except the Pharisees. Matthew writes that He saw their hypocrisy, how they made others bear heavy loads and lorded it over them, how they exalted themselves. He saw into their hearts, by their actions, which were hard and legalistic. (Matthew 23:1-33) Unfortunately many leaders in our community come across in the same way in these days.

But the average person wants to be a "good" person, and does not necessarily want to have bad thoughts or actions. They try to be "nice" on the outside while often battling the bad thoughts and inclinations within the heart and mind. Some have had bad experiences with leaders who could not accept that each of us have our own unique personalities and even peculiarities. We hope this booklet will help anyone who wants to change the inclinations of the heart. We have seen that some who are inclined to evil very often get more enmeshed in their temptations, because this is what happens if we follow evil life patterns. There is a devil who wants to kill, steal and destroy, (John 10:10) and the end path of all who do get enmeshed is a ruined life and a hardened and self-justifying heart. Their stories might make entertaining movies for the voyeur but their end is spiritual death and judgment by a holy God, who will eventually destroy all evil as He did with the flood. (2 Peter 3:6&7) Perhaps, dear reader, you have chosen this book because you are intrigued by the cover and want answers. We (the writers) love to read and teach the Bible because we have found it truly has the answers we need to give us a good life.

## **2. "GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE".** (Genesis 1:27)

We would like to start from the very beginning, although we have said this in many of our books. In the context in which God said this He was speaking the creation into being. Thus He intends that we are speaking spirits too. God has made us to like talking, and expressing our thoughts and opinions. Thus we find those who agree with us and sometimes those who do not, but whom we can learn

from or moderate our opinion if so needed. It is comfortable to associate with those who have the same ideas that we do, and there is strength in group agreement. Our difficulty comes when we are in the company of strongly opinionated people who force their ideas on the rest of us, especially those who love conformity and have the power to enforce it. We have met many people who have compromised their own standards for the sake of keeping a "friend" or a job, and have probably been caught in this trap ourselves, because persecution, especially in the form of ridicule and mocking, is unpleasant.

But if we are created in the image of God then we should hold to God's standards, and He has made them very plain. The reason Moses went onto the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments was because the Israelites at Mount Sinai did not want God to speak with them because they were afraid. (Exodus 20:18-21)

But God speaks into our hearts all the time, even if we do not recognise His voice. Sometimes it is an echo of a parent's voice, sometimes our conscience, something that we have read and the thought returns unbidden. The Bible itself tells us that God spoke at many times and in various ways. (Hebrews 1:1) This is because He always wanted us to relate to Him personally. It was only because He is holy and a consuming fire (Hebrews 12:29 and Deuteronomy 4:24) which would burn all our sin, that He does not approach us. This is why God sent Jesus into the world, to deal with our sin problem, and especially our hearts which are resolutely opposed to obeying God's commands. If we are to reflect the image of God, which is His intention, we need to look to Him as in a mirror. "The Son is the

radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3) because He obeyed completely the Father's will for Him. Jesus said, "I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave Me to do". (John 17:4) "I do nothing on My own but speak just what the Father has taught Me...I always do what pleases Him". (John 8:28&29) So Jesus is truly the image of God because He reflects the very nature and the actions of God.

Jesus said some extraordinary things when He was teaching His disciples.

"My sheep listen to My voice; I know them, and they follow Me". (John 10:27) This indicates that Jesus speaks to us, guiding us into the works which God has prepared us to do. (Ephesians 2:10) These works will be according to our gifts and abilities, our interests and our training.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father". (John 14:12) When we are fully trained in faith, and not just knowledge as we understand it in the world (learning), fully convinced that everything that God has said is true, we are ready to be used by God for the miraculous works that Jesus did.

Paul's words should encourage us to aspire to this. "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us". (2 Corinthians 5:20)

The manifested image of God is not only holy but full of love. According to Paul this love is patient, kind, does not envy, does not boast, is not proud, rude or self-seeking. It is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs (forgiving readily). Love does not delight in

evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1Corinthians 13:4-8)

The image of God is easily seen as way beyond the natural inclinations of the human heart. With such a standard who could meet it? No wonder we try to deceive ourselves that we try to be good people. We must lower the bar considerably from God's standard, but then we have failed to be in His image. Our hearts which have been created to reflect Him will be unfulfilled and hungry for meaning and purpose. There is a well-known quote attributed to Blaise Pascal – "There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of each man which cannot be satisfied by any created thing but only by God the Creator, made known by Jesus". This is actually a translation from the French of his actual words which were written in the 1600s. When we fill that inner longing for fulfilment with God's Holy Spirit everything in our lives falls into place.

### **3. THE FOOL SAYS IN HIS HEART, "THERE IS NO GOD". (Psalm 14:1)**

We meet people who are proud to call themselves atheists, denying there is a God and proclaiming that nature or the universe made nature. They deny that the order that is in the creation is formed by someone greater than ourselves and many seem to follow the idea that the creation came from a big bang millions of years ago and just evolved into order.

We had an interesting conversation with a confessed atheist recently, who says he keeps the Ten Commandments. Since he is an atheist he breaks the very first commandment – you shall have no other gods before (or beside) Me. He was rather shocked by this



comment and had to agree that he had no god at all, effectively saying that he is his own god. He is of course entitled to his opinion but he therefore has no standard but his own. He is certainly a nice person but he is making his own standard and is therefore not subject to any other perhaps greater one. All his inherent weaknesses make him vulnerable to others, without any recourse for help and protection but his own wits.

The Bible calls him a fool. The dictionary has interesting definitions for a fool. 1 – a person who acts unwisely. 2 – a deceived person. There are nearly 100 words which are used to describe fools and foolish behaviour, none of which are flattering. So this is strong language.

Since this statement is written by David, perhaps he was thinking of his encounter with Goliath. (1 Samuel 17:1-51) Goliath was deceived into thinking that he had everything going for him and could afford to mock those who believed in God, and even mock God Himself if He existed at all. Goliath was huge in size and strength and had the very best armour and weapons. But God knew where Goliath was vulnerable and when David put the stones into his slingshot to fire them God gave David the favour that he believed for, and Goliath fell to the ground, fatally wounded. God always responds to our faith in Him.

But since Jesus came to pay the price for all sin for all time God has not punished people in this way. But Jesus did also use this word to describe people. He tells the story of a man who became rich by greed and decided to store his riches for himself. (Luke 12:16- 21) Jesus sums up his story with the comment, "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God".

Jesus also tells a story of a foolish builder who built his house on the sand. (Matthew 7:26) Strangely enough this still happens even in these days where people have wanted their sea view so much they have built too near the seashore. Although this story is a parable about building on good foundations in our lives it comes from real life experience. In other words, unless we build on the solid foundations of Jesus Christ, all our life's work will have no credit with God on judgment day, and will be burned up. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) The foolish builder built his life in his own way, hoping he had done enough good things. But our eternal life in Heaven with God is not earned by our good works but because Jesus has won our place in Heaven by His good works.

The sad fact for the one the Bible calls a fool is that there is a second death. (Revelation 2:11) This can only be understood if we believe what God has said in the Bible. The second death is the lake of fire, (Revelation 20:14) and it is ready for the devil, the beast and the false prophet. (Revelation 20:10)

When John wrote these words by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit he began by saying, "Blessed is the one who reads the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it". (Revelation 1:3) God has made quite sure that everybody can know about this horrible end and avoid it. Stubbornly going one's own way is quite definitely foolish! But we are in the control of the devil if we are not willingly under the control of God, and the devil wants to take us with him into the fire if we let him.

Solomon wrote many warnings to "a fool". The way of a fool is right to him. (Proverbs 12:15) A fool shows his annoyance at once. (Proverbs

12:16) His writings in Ecclesiastes compare the wise and the foolish. "A fool is consumed by his own lips. At the beginning his words are folly; at the end they are wicked madness – and the fool multiplies words". (Ecclesiastes 10:12-14) "A fool's work wearies him". (Ecclesiastes 10:15) Since Solomon was enticed away from his trust in God by his hundreds of wives (and partners) (1 Kings 11:1-6) he must have had great insight into folly. It is very sad to read such an end to such a grand beginning. But it is recorded that God spoke to him to give him a chance to repent but he did not, and lost God's favour.

#### **4. THE LORD IS CLOSE TO THE BROKEN-HEARTED.** (Psalm 34:18)

"Our offences are many in Your sight, and our sins testify against us...rebellion and treachery against the Lord, turning our backs on our God, fomenting oppression and revolt, uttering lies our hearts have conceived". (Isaiah 59:12&13)

"Return...to the Lord your God. Your sins have been your downfall! Take words with you and return to the Lord. Say to Him: 'Forgive all our sins and receive us graciously, that we may offer the fruit of our lips'". (Hosea 14:2) And God's reply – "I will heal their waywardness (backsliding) and love them freely, for My anger has turned away from them". (Hosea 14:4) "Who is a God like You, who pardons sin and forgives the transgression...You do not stay angry for ever but delight to show mercy". (Micah 7:18)

When our hearts are damaged by what we have done and by what has been done to us, the Lord comes very close. "While we were still sinners Christ died for us". (Romans 5:8) This is how God demonstrates His own love for us. He pours out His love into our hearts by the Holy

Spirit. (Romans 5:5) Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12) but this hope of God's promised mercy and grace will not disappoint us.

There is much to encourage us to come to God when our heart is broken for any reason. "This is what the high and lofty One says – He who lives for ever, whose name is holy: I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite". (Isaiah 57:15) "This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word". (Isaiah 66:2) Jesus taught on this too. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted". (Matthew 5:3&4)

Grief and loss are the results of the devil's schemes to kill, steal and destroy. (John 10:10) Many people ask why God allows this to happen, but it seems that God allows this to see if we will turn to Him in our hour of need. He genuinely wants to help us and comfort us, but He disciplines those He loves. (Hebrews 12:6) He is training His children to be overcomers but we cannot be overcomers if we have nothing to overcome. The difficult part is in believing that God is faithful: He will not let us be tempted beyond what we can bear, and will provide a way out so that we can stand up under it. (1 Corinthians 10:13) Just at the breaking point He sends something or someone. As the proverb says, "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart, and good news gives health to the bones". (Proverbs 15:30)

One of the writers' great privileges in our street ministry is to meet people and offer to pray for them. Sometimes we get a response where that person says "I was meant to meet you today". When we have gone through some hard times we can take courage with God's

promise. "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God". (2 Corinthians 1:4)

In our cover picture the heart has been patched up, but a truly broken heart cannot be just patched up. When really terrible things have been done it is impossible in the human heart to forgive the offending person, whether it is ourselves or another. But unforgiveness will damage our relationship with God and the heart will never heal. It is only when we receive a new heart, soft with the love of God, that we are then able to move on from the heartbreak. Many people who have served their country in war, or attended accidents and crime scenes, and have seen terrible things are often badly affected in their hearts by the memories. Their hearts are really damaged by these memories. Rejection and abuse also damage hearts. At first the damage is spiritual but it can become physical. There is far too much suicide caused by these factors. It is so wicked that much of the established church offers religion rather than the love and the power of God, who really wants to be close to the broken hearted.

We used to sing a song, *"To get a touch from the Lord is so real. If you draw near to Him He will draw near to you"*. James writes, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and He will come near to you". (James 4:7&8) God respects our free will and will never force Himself on us, because Love never overrides free will, so He waits until we call out to Him, then He is there instantly. "The Lord is near. Do not be

anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus". (Philippians 4:6&7)

We use the expression "heart-broken" when we have had a great loss. Perhaps we are thinking that this is just a state of mind, but spiritually it is probably literally true. God really does want us to come to Him for healing. When He has comforted us and healed our heart this should avoid the grief becoming physical. Anything we consider a disaster is actually an opportunity to meet and to know God, and this is all because Jesus died on a Cross for us. He truly is our Saviour!

## **5. I WILL GIVE THEM A HEART TO KNOW ME, THAT I AM THE LORD.** (Jeremiah 24:7)

This verse goes on to say, "They will be My people and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with all their heart". If we believe that God means to keep this promise it gives us confidence to come to Him. Then He makes another promise. "I will give you a **new heart** and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh". (Ezekiel 36:26)

When we receive this new heart from God it is tuned to His voice. There are no scars in a new heart. The scars of the old heart had made its owner inflexible, unable to bend to new revelations, which God likes to whisper to His loved ones. These secrets which God shares with His children are always special because each one of us is unique in His sight and so God relates to each one of us in different

and personalised ways. These personalised messages become the treasure that we enjoy in our hearts and then can share with others. "Out of the treasures (what is of value) (overflow) of the heart the mouth speaks". (Matthew 12:34 and Luke 6:45)

These unique experiences become our testimony, to bring glory and honour to the One who gave them to us. We understand God's ways and His nature more and more, and this is what changes us into His likeness, as we become convinced of His wisdom and His power in us. Paul prayed for all those he had introduced to Jesus in this way. "I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know Him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints (those who have been saved, redeemed by the shed blood of Jesus), and His incomparably great power for us who believe. (Ephesians 1:17-19)

Then **how do we receive our new heart?** Simply by opening our minds to the possibility, asking God and receiving by faith. "It is with your heart that you believe and are justified". (Romans 10:10) Just as if I'd never sinned! The Holy Spirit not only convicts of sin and judgment, but He also convinces our hearts that we are righteous in God's sight because of the Divine exchange which Jesus has accomplished for us by His death – He took our sins and gave us His right standing with our Heavenly Father. (John 16:8)

There are many Christians who do not seem to know this. They try to act like a Christian in their own strength. Some have been persecuted and their hearts are wounded. Jesus warned us that we

would be. Yet He also says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness". (Matthew 5:10) In His prayer before going to the Cross He admits to the Father that the world has hated them. (John 17:14) Some have become so discouraged that they have given up meeting with other Christians, yet we are advised by the writer to the Hebrews not to give up meeting together. (Hebrews 10:25) But if God knows this is how it will be He has also assured us that He will deal with the persecutor Himself if we trust Him to do so. (Romans 12:19)

"The Word of God is living and active. Sharper than any two-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart". (Hebrews 4:12) When we come to Him He takes our side if we are depending on Him.

In a previous chapter we recalled a wonderful promise. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6&7) There is a wonderful promise which gives us assurance of God's faithfulness in this matter. "If God is for us, who can be against us? ...I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons (heavenly rulers – those beings who are the servants of the devil), neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord". (Romans 8:31,38&39)

When we have received our new heart we have a responsibility to guard it. "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life". (Proverbs 4:23) This proverb is written in the context of keeping



God's Word within the heart, and of always speaking **for** God's Word and never against it. Corrupt talk will actually cause damage to our heart and our "new man". "A man's heart reflects the man". (Proverbs 27:19) "If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come"! (2 Corinthians 5:17)

## **6. IT IS GOOD FOR OUR HEARTS TO BE STRENGTHENED BY GRACE.** (Hebrews 13:9)

Jesus knew the power of **speaking** God's Word. "Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God". (Matthew 4:4) He was in a situation where He was weak and under pressure, and in a very unfavourable place. On another occasion He was facing something very horrible, where His whole being was filled with dread. His solution was to come before His Father and dedicate Himself to the Father's will and His own destiny. (Luke 22:39-44) And the Father sent angels to strengthen Him. When He was on the Cross Jesus knew how important it is to forgive for our spiritual welfare so in the midst of His agony He said aloud, "Father forgive them". (Luke 23:34)

These three examples that Jesus demonstrated show us how to keep our hearts clean, and how to keep strong in the grace of God. **Grace is defined as unmerited favour.** In every letter Paul wrote he speaks God's grace to his readers. (Romans 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, Philippians 1:2, Colossians 1:2, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, 2 Timothy 1:2, Titus 1:4, Philemon 1:3) By speaking these words to those he loves and has given his life to serve for Jesus' sake, Paul believes he is calling on Jesus to impart this grace

through Paul's own faith. His heart is tuned to God, and out of that abundance his mouth speaks so that God will bring his words to pass. This is the privilege and opportunity God gives us as His speaking spirits, which makes having our hearts renewed and sanctified of great importance. This action is by faith according to the Word of God, which therefore guarantees that it will become a reality. (Isaiah 51:16 & Isaiah 55:11)

Paul also writes about eagerly desiring spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. "He who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort". (1 Corinthians 14:1&3) Jesus apparently surprised His hearers by the gracious words that came from His lips. (Luke 4:22) David describes the words of God as sweeter than honey, and in keeping them there is great reward. (Psalm 19:10&11) Peter encourages us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ". (2 Peter 3:18)

"The Lord knows the secrets of the heart". (Psalm 44:21) David wrote, "O Lord, You have searched me and You know me...You created my inmost being...search me and know my heart". (Psalm 139:1,13 & 23) He has learned to trust God so that his heart and his speech are in line with God's ways. His prayer to receive God's mercy and grace is, "test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting". (Psalm 139:23&24)

David also understood the connection with his heart and his mouth. "Set a guard over my mouth, O Lord; keep watch over the door of my lips. Let not my heart be drawn to what is evil, to take part in wicked deeds with men who are evildoers; let me not eat of their delicacies". (Psalm 141:3&4) When people are mean or rude or unfair to us it is very

tempting to think about how we can 'get them back'. David certainly had some terrible things done to him, especially by King Saul. But getting back at them puts us in the same evil that has been done to us. "The heart of the righteous weighs its answers". (Proverbs 15:28)

We must respond in a godly way, and this is why we need our hearts to be strengthened by God's grace. Paul wrote a beautiful prayer. **"I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God"**. (Ephesians 3:16-19)

God's original intention, having called us into His family, is made very plain. "He has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ". (Ephesians 1:3) He wants us to be holy and blameless in His sight – for His praise and glory – sons and daughters who demonstrate His goodness, grace and mercy. He planned this before we were born and He enabled us to respond to His call. When we first believed He sealed us with His Spirit who will guide us on this path to holiness, so it is important that we are strengthened to recognise God's grace and also His mercy so that we will move forward and not be side-tracked by the temptations of the world. John describes these as "the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does". (1 John 2:16)

## **7. SET YOUR HEARTS ON THINGS ABOVE WHERE CHRIST IS SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.** (Colossians 3:1)

This verse begins with the reason why we should do this. "Since then you have been raised with Christ". This is a profound statement because this act of God was a fulfilment of prophecy. "Nor will You let Your Holy One see decay (Sheol – the place of the dead)." (Psalm 16:10) Peter used these words on the Day of Pentecost, with the statement, "God raised Him from the dead, freeing Him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him". (Acts 2:24) Paul preached similarly, "the One whom God raised from the dead did not see decay". (Acts 13:37) Paul also preached, "Regarding His Son, who as to His human nature was a descendant of David, and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God, by His resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 1:3&4) This power is the working of His mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. (Ephesians 1:19-21)

If we have been raised with Christ, in the anointing of Jesus, the Holy One, then we too will not see decay and it should be impossible also for us that anything to do with death, that is sin, should keep its hold on us. When we set our hearts on everything that Jesus, the Christ, has won for us, this extraordinary standing before Almighty God becomes a reality in our lives, and we can truly represent Him as He wishes us to do.

Paul has a very interesting argument about Christ being raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep, (ready to go into heaven). (1 Corinthians 15:12-26) "Since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a Man. As in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive". This eternal life begins when we submit ourselves to God through Christ. "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". (Hebrews 10:22)

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds as shown by your evil behaviour. But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation – if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel". (Colossians 1:21-23)

Paul prays "that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light". (Colossians 1:10-12) Jeremiah prophesied long before, "I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve". (Jeremiah 17:10)

When we have been buried with Christ and raised with Him through faith in the power of God who raised Him from the dead, (Colossians 2:12) we will grow in this grace which God has poured out to us.

And what are some of the things that we can do to set our hearts on where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father?



**Whatever is true, whatever is noble,  
whatever is right, whatever is pure,  
whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable,  
if anything is excellent  
or praiseworthy –  
think about such things,  
and put it into  
practice.**

(Philippians 4:8)

When we love God with all our heart, and reflect His love, which He has poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us, instead of bluff and bluster, bombast and wind, living water, words of wisdom and all the gifts of the Spirit will issue forth. "We have... received the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words". (1 Corinthians 2:12&13)

"Whatever is true" – we do not think, hold in our hearts or speak out gossip. Paul writes that for holy living we must rid ourselves of slander and lying to each other. (Colossians 3:8&9)

"Whatever is noble" – the thesaurus gives a large list of words, such as upright, honourable, virtuous, incorruptible, of impressive

appearance (perhaps in our witness?), loyal (especially to God and His Word?), self-sacrificing, and another 20 characteristics.

"Whatever is right" – we do what God has put into our hearts to do in obedience to His desires because He has trusted us to continue Jesus' work on the earth.

"Whatever is pure" – can we have untainted or uncompromised thoughts and actions in our relationships, with God and with others?

"Whatever is lovely" – on the other hand we can try to think kindly of others (or God Himself) when things do not go our way.

"Whatever is admirable" – "we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves". (Romans 15:1) So we could encourage others rather than despise them.

"If anything is excellent or praiseworthy" – these words are a good summary of Paul's exhortation to the Philippians and all who read his words. Yet who can meet this standard which Paul believes is from God?

## **8. A HEART THAT PLEASES GOD**

Solomon asked God for a discerning heart, a request which pleased God. (1 Kings 3:9&10)

When Jesus was speaking about being the Bread of Life, (John 6:25-66) He said something that was so difficult for His hearers that many of His followers no longer wanted to follow Him. "Unless you can eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life". These words seemed so outrageous and repulsive, and yet are extremely important for those who desire to live in God's presence for ever.

When the Canaanite woman came to Jesus for help Jesus deliberately implied she was a dog. (Matthew 15:26) These instances obviously call for discernment. God wants us to trust Him completely in spite of "appearances". It seems that a heart that pleases God always allows Him to be right. Yet in our world today people, even people who call themselves Christians, argue against His decrees and laws as "out of date". But Jesus also warned that because of the increase of wickedness, the love of **most** will grow cold. (Matthew 24:12) The new heart which we wrote about in chapter 5 should be soft to learning God's ways. "You show that you are a letter from Christ... written not with ink but with the Spirit of the Living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts". (2 Corinthians 3:3)



This is what the Spirit of God trains the human heart to look like. It is also an illustration of God's heart which was demonstrated when Jesus paid the price for sin and reconciled us to God. Recently we (the writers) heard someone say that at his church they preach fearing God, and also preaching hellfire for those who disobey. The Old Testament might, without understanding and discernment, be seen to say this, but the truth is that God ALWAYS wanted fellowship and



relationship with His chosen family. He always had redemption and forgiveness for sin on His heart because He knows our weaknesses and He also knows the devil's resolved plans to be a god, even above Almighty God. (Isaiah 14:13&14)

"I (the Lord) have loved you with an everlasting love". (Jeremiah 31:3) "I long to redeem them..." (Hosea 7:13) "Everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved". (Joel2:32) "Who is a God like You, who pardons sin (rebellion against God) and forgives...transgression (of God's laws)"? (Micah 7:18) "The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in Him". (Nahum 1:7)

A heart that pleases God imitates His ideal which He has shown to us by His own example. When our hearts and minds are being renewed by a deliberate willingness to be transformed to His likeness we will grow in confidence and trust. "You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts You". (Isaiah 26:3)

Jesus' example is "I am gentle and humble in heart". (Matthew 11:29) He could say this because His heart knew it and His mouth could then confess it. "A wise man's heart guides his mouth and his lips are persuasive (promote instruction)". (Proverbs 16:23) He was always obedient to His Father, speaking the words from the Father's heart, revealing the character of the Father to make Him known. (John 1:18) He had the Spirit of wisdom and understanding. (Isaiah 11:2) Wisdom is personified. "I raise My voice to all mankind...gain prudence...gain understanding. Listen for I have worthy things to say; I open My lips to speak what is right. My mouth speaks what is true...all the words of My mouth are just...to the discerning all of them are right; they are

faultless to those who have knowledge...wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you can desire can compare..." (Proverbs 8:4-11)

We will be fit to continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of lips that confess His Name (His heart, His character, His ways). (Hebrews 13:13) God desires that His family, His children represent Him in this world. To do this we must also speak on His behalf – to be His ambassadors. (2 Corinthians 5:20) James warns us to guard our tongue. (James 3:1-12) Then he writes of the wisdom from heaven that is pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. "Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness. (James 3:18) "Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech...he must seek peace and pursue it, for the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer". (1 Peter 3:10-12 and Psalm 34:12-16)

Jesus' description of His ministry was a fulfilment of prophecy. (Isaiah 61:1-3) "The Spirit of the Lord is on Me to preach good news to the poor..." (Luke 4:18&19) Then He adds the acts that would do this in practice. Then He sends out the disciples and another 72 to do this work in His authority. (Luke 9:1-6 and Luke 10:1-24) The good news simply is "the time has come, the kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news". (Mark 1:15) The angels preached that there was to be peace on earth to men on whom God's favour rests. (Luke 2:14) We can confidently proclaim, from our hearts, **God's favour rests on all who will receive by faith**. "Search me O God, and know my heart". (Psalm 139:23) "Submit yourselves to God...come near to Him". (James 4:7&8)

There is a beautiful hymn which expresses what we are trying to say in this chapter, so we will finish this booklet with the words of Charles Wesley, written so long ago.

O for a heart to praise my God, a heart from sin set free,  
a heart that always feels Thy blood so freely shed for me:

a heart resigned, submissive, meek, my great Redeemer's throne,  
where only Christ is heard to speak, where Jesus reigns alone:

a humble, lowly, contrite heart, believing, true, and clean,  
which neither life nor death can part from Him that dwells within:

a heart in every thought renewed, and full of love divine,  
perfect, and right, and pure, and good,  
a copy, Lord, of Thine.

Thy nature, gracious Lord, impart:  
come quickly from above,  
write Thy new name upon my heart,  
thy new, best name of Love.

(Charles Wesley 1707-1788)