

THE HEART

Although the word *heart* is used over nine hundred times in scripture it is almost never referred to in the literal sense, as the centre of physical life. It is almost always used figuratively for the seat or source of human motives, desires, feelings, affections, passions, impulses, thoughts etc (CP Pr 4:20-27). In V 20-23 here we see that the heart is the depository of all wisdom – *for out of it are the issues of life* – and in V 24-27 we learn that it is the source of whatever affects speech, sight and conduct (CP Mk 7:14-23). Christians learn from this that while they must always outwardly be seen to be conforming to the image of God, they must always inwardly – in the deepest recesses of the heart – also conform. For it is out of what is stored up in their heart that men speak out – whether it be to God’s glory by Christians or that which is a reproach to God by evil men (CP Mt 12:34; Lu 6:45). This impresses upon Christians the necessity of having their hearts filled only with the things of God for Him to be glorified in all that they say and do.

It needs to be impressed upon Christians here that they must not engage in any immoral, impure, frivolous, empty, idle or profitless talk. They must be careful to speak only that which ministers grace to the hearers and builds them up for their spiritual profit (CP Eph 4:29; 5:1-4, Col 3:16). *Foolish talking* in Eph 5:4 is stupid talk, idle talk, or talking foolishly. It is foolish in the sense of the lack of forethought and wisdom. *Jesting* here refers to course jesting, ribaldry – suggestive and immoral wit, obscene and offensive talk. All such talk is destructive of holy living and must be stopped and repented of if those involved want to inherit the eternal kingdom (CP 2Ti 4:1-2). In the Greek construction of this passage of scripture Paul commands Timothy, and by extension every Christian throughout the church age, to preach God’s word with dignity and authority which will command the respect, careful attention and affirmative response of listeners. There is no place for flippancy or jocularly when preaching God’s word (CP Tit 2:7-8). We learn from what Paul says here that preaching should be free from side-issues, doctrinal novelties, fads, crudities, levity and jokes. Preaching should be free from anything to which exception might be taken.

In Pr 4:20-23 we saw that the heart is the depository of all wisdom. It is also the centre of intellect – every imagination of the thoughts of the heart in the people of Adam’s day was only evil continually (CP Gen 6:5). Scriptures speak of the wise-hearted who God had filled with the spirit of wisdom (CP Ex 28:3), wise-hearted women (CP Ex 35:25), the wise in heart will receive commandments (CP Pr 10:8), and the wise of heart shall be master of the fool (CP Pr 11:24). The Israelites knew in their hearts that God was chastening them in their forty years sojourn in the wilderness before He let them enter into the promised land (CP De 8:2-5). Hannah prayed in her heart for a son (CP 1Sam 1:9-17, 20). King David mediated in his heart (CP Psa 19:14). The law of God is in the heart of the righteous (CP Psa 37:30-31). The Psalmist hid God’s word in his heart (CP Psa 119:11). Evil and violent men devise mischiefs in their heart (CP Psa 140:1-2). God’s children keep the words that guarantee them life and health in their hearts (CP Pr 4:20-22). It is what a man thinks in his heart that

counts, not what he says (CP Pr 23:7). Evil men reason in their hearts (CP Mk 2:6-8). Christians are admonished not to doubt in their heart (CP Mk 11:23). To ponder something in the heart means to consider it carefully (CP Lu 1:66; 2:19). Conscious decisions are made with the heart (CP Ro 6:17). Christians receive the word of faith – the Gospel – into their heart and there believe it for their salvation (CP Ro 10:8-9).

The heart is also the centre of feeling. Scriptures speak of the Lord being grieved at His heart that He had made man (CP Gen 6:6). Aaron was glad in his heart to see Moses (CP Ex 4:14). The children of Israel were discouraged in their hearts from going into the Promised Land (CP Nu 32:7-9). Children of God are to Love God with all their heart, soul and might (CP De 6:5, Mk 12:30). Hearts filled with pride are cut off from God (CP De 8:14; Psa 101:5; Eze 28:5, 17). Children of God are not to harden their hearts against the poor (CP De 15:7), nor against God (CP Psa 95:8; He 3:8). One of the curses from which God’s children have been delivered is a trembling heart (CP De 28:65). God’s enemies’ hearts melted when they heard He had dried up the River Jordan for the Israelites to cross over in the Exodus (CP Josh 5:1). God hears the cry of those whose hearts are tender toward Him, and humble themselves (CP 2Ki 22:19). Christians are commanded to be tender hearted and forgiving toward each other (CP Eph 4:32). A merry heart reflects God’s goodness (CP 2Chr 7:10). It makes a cheerful countenance, and he that has a merry heart has a continual feast (CP Pr 15:13-15). It also does good like a medicine (CP Pr 17:22).

Job complained that God had terrified him and made his heart faint (soft (KJV) CP Job 23:16). God put gladness in King David’s heart (CP Psa 4:7). The Lord draws near to those of a broken heart, of a broken and contrite heart and of a contrite heart (CP Psa 34:18; 51:17; Isa 57:15). King David’s heart was sore-pained when he was greatly oppressed by his enemies (CP Psa 55:4). God was also pained in His heart at Israel’s rebellion against Him (CP Jer 4:19). David’s heart was also desolate within him under his oppression (CP Psa 143:4). Scriptures also speak of heavy hearts (CP Pr 12:25; 25:20; 31:6; Ro 9:2); sorrowful hearts (CP Pr 14:13; 15:13; Ro 9:2); fretting hearts (CP Pr 19:23); the servants of God sing for joy in their hearts (CP Isa 65:14); bitter hearts (CP Eze 27:31); burning hearts (CP Lu 24:32); troubled hearts (CP Jn 14:1, 27).

The heart is also spoken of in Scripture as the centre of moral and Spiritual life. God speaks against wicked hearts in which evil is devised against others (CP De 15:9; Pr 6:14, 18, Jer 4:14, 18). The hearts of God’s children must be perfect before Him (CP 1Ki 8:61; 1Chr 29:9). Scriptures speak of men with divided loyalties as double-hearted (CP 1Chr 12:33; Psa 12:1 (Jas 1:8)). A pure heart is a requisite for the children of God (CP Psa 24:4; Mt 5:8; 1Pe 1:22). God will strengthen the hearts of those who wait on Him (CP Psa 27:14). King David admonishes the upright in heart to shout for joy (CP Psa 32:11); he pleads with God to continue in righteousness towards them (CP Psa 36:10); the upright in heart will glory in God (CP Psa 64:10); the Psalmist declares that gladness is

sown for the upright in heart (CP Psa 97:11). King David prayed for God to create a clean heart in him (CP Psa 51:10); the Psalmist Asaph declares that God is good to such as are of a clean heart (CP Psa 73:1); Solomon questions if any individual can say he made his own heart clean (CP Pr 20:9). He whose heart is fixed on God will give praise to Him (CP Psa 57:7); he shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed on God (CP Psa 112:1). Solomon speaks of a woman dressed as a harlot and subtil – cunning, crafty – of heart (CP Pr 7:10). Solomon declares that those of a froward – perverse – heart are an abomination to the Lord and despised (CP Pr 11:20; 12:8). Destruction comes through a haughty heart (CP Pr 18:12; Jer 49:29). Just as the height of heaven and the depth of the earth, so the heart of a king is unsearchable (CP Pr 25:3).

When Jerusalem becomes God’s seat of government in the new earth, all those who walked after the imaginations of an evil heart will hearken to the Lord (CP Jer 3:17) – prior to this they did not hearken to God (CP Jer 7:24; 11:8; 16:12); New Testament Christians are warned against an evil heart of unbelief leading them away from God (CP He 3:12). The day will come when God will punish the uncircumcised in heart (CP Jer 9:25-26; Eze 44:6-9); the uncircumcised in heart still exist (CP Ac 7:51-53). God declared that the heart is deceitful above all things (CP Jer 17:9). Covetous hearts are denounced in both Old and New Testaments (CP Jer 22:17; 2Pe 2:14). Isaiah prophesied of the Jews hearts waxed gross that they cannot understand and be saved (CP Mt 13:14-15 (Isa 6:9-10)). Jesus warns His followers in view of His second coming not to allow their hearts to be overcharged with the pleasures of life (CP Lu 21:34). Scriptures also tell of Ananias’ heart in which lying was allowed to be contrived by Satan (CP Ac 5:1-4). The heart is also spoken of as that which condemns Christians (CP 1Jn 3:19-21).

Finally, the heart is the centre of all voluntary activities originating in the human will. Scriptures speak of the heart that can be hardened toward God and refuses to obey Him (CP Ex 4:21; 7:3, 13-14, 22-23; 8:10, 15, 19, 32; 9:7, 12, 34-35; 10:1, 20, 27; 11:10; 14:4, 8; De 15:7; 1Sam 6:6; 2Chr 36:13; Psa 95:8; Pr 28:14; Jn 12:40; Ro 1:24; He 3:8). In the Exodus the Israelites gave offerings to God from a willing heart (CP Ex 25:2; 35:5, 29). God hardened a king’s spirit on the Israelites’ way to the Promised Land and made his heart obstinate (CP De 2:30). The people under Joshua inclined their heart toward the Lord (CP Josh 24:23-24). Hearts can be set to seek the Lord (CP 1Chr 22:19). Hearts can be set to please God (CP 2Chr 6:7-8). Hearts can be wholly used to seek God (CP Psa 119:2, 10). Hearts can be inclined to God’s word and away from covetousness (CP Psa 119:36). Jesus was meek and lowly of heart (CP Mt 11:29). Judas allowed the devil to put into his heart to

betray Jesus (CP Jn 13:2). As new Christians were added to the New Testament church they fellowshipped with each other with singleness of heart (CP Ac 2:46). Servants were admonished by Paul to be obedient to their masters in singleness of heart (CP Eph 6:5). Through the lusts of their own foolish and darkened hearts God gave homosexuals and lesbians over to uncleanness and a reprobate mind (CP Ro 1:21, 24, 28). God’s wrath will be poured out on Judgement Day upon those with hard and impenitent hearts (CP Ro 2:5). Christians purpose in their hearts to give into the kingdom (CP 2Cor 9:7).

This is not an exhaustive study. The Scriptures herein mentioned are merely representative of the manner in which the word *heart* is used in Scripture. For instance, in the Old Testament we read that Nabal’s heart “died” within him when told by his wife Abigail that she had prevailed upon David not to kill him to avenge his response to David’s request for urgently needed food etc (CP 1Sam 25:14, 18-19, 21-23, 32-39). The heart is also used in the Old Testament to represent a man’s true nature or character. Samson told Delilah *all his heart* (CP Judg 16:17). Because the heart is at the root of man’s problems, that is where God works first. When God made Saul king, He gave him a new heart (CP 1Sam 9:27 – 10:1, 9). Also in the Old Testament God promised Israel that He will take away their “stony heart” and give them a “heart of flesh” when they are restored as a nation in the age to come (CP Eze 11:17-20).

In the New Testament we read that the work of the Old Testament law was “written in the hearts” of the Gentiles, their consciences bearing testimony to the fact (CP Ro 2:14-15). Also in the New Testament, Jesus promised Christians that if they do not doubt in their heart that what they say will come to pass when they pray, they will have whatsoever they say (CP Mk 11:23-24). New Testament Scriptures also teach that Christians’ hearts are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and Christ. Ro 5:5 teaches that the love of God in their hearts is shed abroad by the Holy Spirit, which is given to Christians by God as a pledge of their future resurrection and eternal inheritance in Christ (CP Ro 5:5 with 1Cor 3:16; 2Cor 1:22; 5:1-5; Eph 1:9-14). In Eph 3:17 Paul prays that Christ may dwell in Christians’ hearts by faith (CP Eph 3:17). Finally in closing here, in both the Old and the New Testament we learn that God searches and knows all hearts (CP 1Sam 16:7; 1Chr 28:9; Jer 17:10; Eze 11:5; Lu 16:15; Ro 8:27; He 4:12-13).

As stated at the beginning of this study the word *heart* is used over nine hundred times in Scripture and readers are encouraged to search the Scriptures for themselves to find out how many more different ways the word has been applied. It will be a rewarding study for those who do so.