

# The Gospel Standard



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“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people,”  
Isa. 62:10

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# Editorial

**Blessed are the pure in heart!** A state and condition of blessedness is pronounced by the pure in heart. This issue shall deal with that beatitude found in Matthew 5:8. Brother Elliott has done his usual excellent task of preparing an exegesis of the beatitude. When brother Elliott is asked to do something, he does it to the best of his ability. He is preparing an ebook of lessons on the beatitudes and it should soon be ready for the Internet. It will be in PDF files and readable on computers, Ipads, and, we hope, Kindle. We have to look at their latest format before we can guarantee it will work on Kindle readers.

The pure in heart. What a refreshing thought that there is such a thing as a pure heart. The last several months we have had to deal with the world in business matters. A long day often left me, not only exhausted physically, but also mentally. I quickly learned that you have to be on special guard with lots of worldly people. Otherwise you will find yourself in the middle of an unbreakable contract that you can ill afford. Subtle lies which sound like truth; disguised statements which usually mean one thing but which can also mean something else; switching products, and a hundred other things all combine to make the day full of unwanted surprises. We started a contact page to post short, pithy scriptural, statements, and now it is so full of spam that we may have to cancel it to get rid of the unwanted advertising. One day, I even found a program someone had installed on my computer through some sort of advertisement, a program whereby another party with another computer could take control of my computer. I made a hasty elimination of that through my control panel. Why mention all of this in this editorial?

Each unethical intention or act on the part of one represents a dishonest heart; a heart that is crooked is not pure. It has too much admixture of things that makes it evil. That is right: the heart

which is not pure is an evil heart. The impure heart is not honest; neither is it good, if it is not honest. You see, whatever robs of honesty, also robs of goodness, and if goodness, then purity . Keeping the heart right, forces us to walk a thin line. There is not a whole lot of leeway in maintaining purity of heart. Talk about the narrow way, this is it. Just one little particle of untruth can mess up a whole lot of good things and make them impure. An illustration will emphasize that.

In 2011, actually beginning late in 2010, antibiotics began to have an adverse reaction in my body. As most of you know, a broken ankle and several messed up parts of the other leg from the knee to the ankle caused several open wounds and also, subsequent events brought more, some very minor but potentially very serious. The only standard way to treat these was by antibiotics. Apparently, my immune system was working overtime fighting the same problem. What seems to have happened was, that the immune system apparently began defending my body against the antibiotics. Less than funny things began to occur. All kinds of nasty things began to occur from the top of my head to the feet, and most points between. Antibiotic after antibiotic was used and after an initial good start, the same thing would build up. Finally, the Pharmacist told my doctor that no antibiotics were left which would help my situation. Even some natural antibiotics Wanda and I tried, triggered the same situation. So we had to allow the body to simply heal itself which, at this point, it is almost 100% free from external injuries. Now, the point of the illustration.

Although the injuries were cleansed and treated initially with what normally took care of that nature injury, a slight amount of bacteria found its way through that injury into my body and became serious. It does not take much bacteria, if left untreated, to destroy the whole body. So with the heart; the spiritual source of emotions, feelings, intellect, and will. Just a very slight, unnoticeable impurity will finally, in time, multiply and breed other impurities far more damaging than itself. This is why self examination is required of us in order to maintain the right life

before God, 2 Corinthians 13:5. A short while without a thorough searching of the heart and life and little things grow into enormous spiritual life threatening situations.

Are we beginning to see how tremendously important purity of heart is? If we want to excel in a spiritual life: and why make a half-way effort at all, then we must put forth diligent and serious effort. Having said all this, we think we may have sufficiently introduced the reason why so many in the world are of impure heart. Little things got out of control and they were given over to a greed that is out of control. Passions which are beyond their control. Lusts which must be fulfilled if there is any satisfaction to the life which harbors them. Good church people: is there any similarity clicking that red button in your brain? How about that deacon you have been questioning in your thoughts lately? What about other church leaders; and yes, even the preacher. But they will all defend their actions with official church doctrine. If there is none of that around, they will quickly manufacture some and spread it around.

It may be an *easy* faith, or a *cheap* grace venture, but there is plenty of that, and many other things that work as well with impure hearts. I once heard it said that it is a poor preacher who can't come up with a good excuse for sin. After all, he has heard them all. All the trivial aside though, we live in very troubling times regarding the sinful attitude and carnal behavior of church members. It has become a universal illness. Thankfully, there is an antidote for sin; yea, a sin cure. No, it is not easy, and painless; neither is it pleasant. Christ gave that antidote for sin more than 2,000 years ago on the cross. But it is not easy to apply. A person must die to obtain it. No, not a physical death. A figurative death; a burial with Jesus into his death (Romans 6:3); a putting to death the old man of sin on the cross with Jesus. This is done with the intent of the mind, coupled with the act of baptism, which creates the opportunity for us to be buried with him into his death. One must give his life. First the old man of sin must die; that is, be separated from our life. The new man in Christ is that man clothed

with the character of Jesus. This is really the hard part. That determination to live as Jesus lived, with the disposition, or mindset which Jesus had; the determination to obey the Father regardless of the cost, even to the point of giving one's life in death to obey. This is why relatively few people will accept the antidote. There is more to it than simply believing and inviting Jesus to come into the heart. There is more to it than simply surrendering. There is an active, deliberate action on the part of the one who desires salvation. And it does not end here. There has to be an ongoing examination, and resolving, plus action continuing the rest of the life, in order to maintain purity of heart.

But the end result is well worth the effort one must put forth. Just as diligent, sometimes painful and unpleasant efforts, had to be put forth to help the damaged portion of my body be restored, so with the soul. But the end is life. Eternal life; a life in harmony with the creator and giver of life. That is what shall make eternity so pleasant. A life in harmony with the Father and the Son; with the angels, and all the redeemed of earth. A harmonious life. What a glorious blessing. Has your life ever been harmonious?

Are you willing to make the effort to accomplish that?



## **Blessed Are the Pure in Heart**

Melvin Elliott

Matthew 5:8; "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Thus far we have had a lot to say about the heart, spirit or disposition of mankind and rightfully so. Eight of the nine beatitudes directly involve the heart and the ninth does indirectly. We have used many passages in previous lessons to show the acceptable condition of the heart, so we will approach this beatitude a little differently. We will add further information that needs to be considered on this vital matter. Since our Lord gives

so much attention to the condition of the heart, I will remind you that the very foundation of Christianity comes from these beatitudes.

The prophets set forth the idea in Ezekiel 36:26-27; “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.” It is the new heart that directs one to walk in God’s law. Luke 6:45; “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” In this study, we will look at the opposite of the pure heart. With the contrast before us, we can see better that purity of heart must be in the foundation of man’s character in redemption.

The opposite of purity is corruption. Corruption is to lapse from a better condition resulting in the adulteration of a matter which contaminates any and all the good that may have been present. It means, “Debased in character; infected with evil...” It results in one being, “Perverted from uprightness and fidelity in the discharge of duty...” Tragically, such minded people are found too often in leadership positions in religious circles, regardless of their title. When one knowingly chooses to go along with error, injustice, wickedness and looseness of living rather than truth, justice, righteousness and uprightness of conduct, it causes degeneracy of character.

When such occurs, you will observe the upright that upholds purity of practice being ostracized and the guilty exonerated. This impure practice is the result of the corruption of character and the vile conduct is proof that one is not following the pure heart or the new spirit produced by the rule of Jesus. This is far from the righteous conduct of the pure in heart and anyone that would condone such actions is also far from the spirit of God or holiness. Yet I have witnessed such conduct over and over by the leaders of many religious groups. Such corruption of heart causes them to be indifferent to justice but allows carnal pride, politics, prejudice,

and favoritism to rule, instead of righteousness out of the pure heart, yielded to God's rule. When such is allowed to continue, the whole body will degenerate from purity of heart, integrity of character and righteousness of conduct. All such have no concept of the nature of Christianity. Today as long as one upholds the prevailing department standard set by the leadership of their religious group, they are considered to be faithful. However, if one standing forthright for the rule of the kingdom of Christ, raises a voice against sin openly practiced and fellowshiped, he is the one that will be excluded. Note John 16:2-3 with reference to the apostles; "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me."

Proverbs 30:12; "There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness." Today one is not physically murdered by the ungodly but will be falsely accused, calculated to destroy the reputation of the faithful. This is usually done when one refuses to goose step to the false standard of another. This corruption of heart too often holds sway because of our "church concept" of religion with its hierarchy of men that sets the standard of conduct within that organization. This is man made Church doctrine and humanly contrived church policy. Following this will make you a member of a corrupt man made church. But what has this to do with being yielded to the rule of Christ, being called out of the world to serve God out of a pure heart? Because submitting to this calling is what the kingdom God is all about.

Although commonly practiced, the Bible does not teach this church concept of Christianity, nor approves of the corruption which follows. Note these basic passages. I Peter 1:22-23; "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." I Timothy 1:5; "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and

of faith unfeigned:" The word end in this passage means the goal of the commandment. In keeping with this lesson, the goal of the commandments of God is a pure heart, not conformity to "church doctrine." This is the heart that can see God, i.e., have a clear mental understanding of the nature of God.

What is pure? It is that quality which is free from any admixture or contamination. It is what it is and nothing more, or less. Purity cannot be changed, altered or modified in anyway whatsoever and remain pure. Any admixture of anything will contaminate, adulterate and corrupt that which is pure. In order for there to be absolute purity, there must be a standard that is pure by which we judge. What is that standard? Psalm 12:6; "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times." Psalm 19:8; "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes." Psalm 119:140; "Thy word is very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it."

God's word is pure and so the pure in heart are those who are regulated by it. Now we can see the necessity and truth of this statement in Deuteronomy 4:2; "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Proverbs 30:6; "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." What perverseness lies in the heart of man who would knowingly substitute his word in the place of God's word? Paul pointed out the nature of their character to Timothy when he said, "...having their conscience seared with a hot iron." (I Tim. 4:2) All such have no feelings; they don't care, they are heartless, corrupt, wicked, contrary to purity, and care not for the welfare of their hearers.

The obvious question is, how can we have a pure heart? Since the Bible is pure, following the instructions of the Bible will make the heart pure. In Psalm 119:9-11; "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." One does not sin when he

follows the Scripture!

For the remainder of this lesson, we will deal with some specific matters which lead us to purity of heart. We read in Philippians 4:8-9; “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.” As we read in Psalm 119:9-11, we are shown that the word of God is the basis of all these things.

For example, Psalm 119:160; “Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.” A good paraphrase would be, “The sum of thy word is true forever...” When you have all that God has said on a matter, only then do you have the truth. Also, if the sum is true, all the parts must be true. Psalm 33:4; “For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth.” I John 2:21; “I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth.” Because of these characteristics of truth, we must love truth, search for it, accept it and put complete confidence in it to have a pure heart.

Note the following. We must live in harmony with truth to know God. I John 2:3-4-5; “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” We become children of God through the truth found only in the scriptures. James 1:18; “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” We must follow truth to have God's presence. Psalm 145:18; “The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.” We must hold to truth to have God's mercy. Psalm 85:10; “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” In this short consideration, we have seen that to know God, to be his children, to have his continued

presence, mercy and peace, fellowship and forgiveness, all depend upon the heart purified by yielding to, and walking in truth. To say, or practice otherwise, makes one essentially a liar!

The next thing necessary for heart purity is honesty. In Luke 8:15; "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience." The honest heart has to be present before it can be good. Further, the honest heart will hear the word and keep it. The word honest means more than telling the truth but it carries with it the idea of deserving of esteem based on the whole of life. Such a one is honorable, sincere, fair, right and practices all like characteristics. First, we must be sincere in our attitude toward the word of God. Sincere means the same through and through. Look in II Corinthians 4:1-4; "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." We do not have space to discuss these verses further but what a difference in the life of the person with the honest heart contrasted with the deceitful heart.

Paul now speaks of things that are just. Just means to live and act in a straight way. Such is declared of God. Deuteronomy 32:4; "He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he." Deuteronomy 16:20; "That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Romans 1:17; "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith." God is declared to be just and to be his; we will have to be just. As the just live by the faith, we will have to live in harmony with God's word in order to be just. Further, if we live by the faith we will be just therefore, all injustice is a faithless act: a

failure to follow God's word and a sinful act.

Next, Paul says, "...[W]hatsoever things are pure..." We want to add, as a means to a fuller understanding of purity, the following. The word translated pure is also translated clean, clear and purge. It is also interesting to note that the word for holy is also translated pure and the various forms of the word are translated pure, purity, pureness, saint, sanctify, chaste and clear. All this is involved in heart purity. Since this whole lesson is about purity, we will pass on to, "...[W]hatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report..." We will look at these together as they are closely related. The word lovely is an interesting one. It is a compound word meaning toward and to love. The word for love is *phileo*. It means tender affection, feelings of the heart instead of the head. Perhaps a close opposite is to be without feelings or hard hearted. It describes the false teacher whose conscious is seared with a hot iron and so without feelings for those that he leads astray. The opposite of this is the lovely heart. A good description of those who have a lovely heart is found in Romans 12:9-10; "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;"

The original word for lovely means; fame or a saying. "Good report" is one word in the original and it means well spoken of, or reputable. The same word for lovely is used of Jesus when he raised the rulers daughter in Matthew 9 and the same word is translated fame in verse 26; "And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land." So Paul is obviously exhorting to think of things that are lovely, i.e., reputable, that will win acceptableness on the basis that they are well spoken of and so, this is a lovely saying. "...if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise..." Since there are excellent and commendable qualities in all of the things in Philippians 4:9, Paul commands, "...[T]hink on these things." The word think is in the middle voice so we are responsible to control our thinking. The word translated think, means to take into account, estimate, conclude or reckon. We must inventory our thoughts hold these things in esteem, and meditate on them because they are of the nature of the things that are necessary for

heart purity.

We cannot make our hearts a cesspool of impure thoughts and expect to be right with God. Proverbs 23:7; “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...” This is a stated fact, and why the thinking of our hearts is so important to purity. Our thinking has a direct impact on the conduct of our lives, “[F]or out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Luke records in Acts 8:21; “Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” By the nature of Simon's request, the apostle John was able to discern Simon's heart was under the control of wrongful thoughts and contemplating unholy intentions. His thinking was carnal, his heart impure.

Now we need to look at the overall Bible picture of the pure heart and this matter will be clear. Proverbs 4:20-24; “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.” Since we are as we think in our heart, we must think on God's word, love truth and keep his words for our heart to be pure. Psalm 119:11; “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.” Again we read Philippians 4:8-9; “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he...”

Now, note very carefully in Psalm 119:1-3. “Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.” Now we understand what David meant when he said, “O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.” (Psalm 119:97) “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” How sad when one

follows the corrupting word of man and will not listen to God's pure word and so, become pure in heart. Proverbs 1:30-33; "They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil."

Will you submit to God, and allow his word to rule that you may be pure in heart, a citizen of his kingdom, and see God?

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## **Maintaining A Pure Heart**

**Charles A. Pledge**

A very difficult task indeed. The caption of this article sets forth a task which is essential to receiving spiritual blessings from God now, and eternally. To some, it would seem an easy enough task. However, most will quickly admit that it is a constant struggle in a battle against impure thoughts.

By impure thoughts, we mean thoughts which often are mostly pure, but have a little taint of impurity. Did you ever unwrap some good cheddar cheese to find a very faint spot of mold on it? A sharp knife and a steady hand in a shaving operation will eliminate the mold and make the cheese ok to eat. However, when the mold gets dark and spreads to many places on the cheese, the shaving operation makes it risky. It is too far gone for superficial efforts.

In a very limited sense, the heart is like that cheese; it may sometimes become tainted with an impurity, and need a slight modification. Not a physical action, but a spiritual. Not an action demanding a material, physical knife, but an action requiring the spiritual sword of Christ; the gospel, Hebrews 4:12. In this article we want to offer a few suggestions to help in a difficult task.

Because we are dealing with the spiritual heart, the entire inner man who controls the fleshly actions by his will, intellect, emotions, and desires, we will need to make the adjustments which will help in the areas needed.

We do not believe that we need to dwell at length on why adjustments are necessary. Several years ago a song made its popular rounds in several circles. I have forgotten its exact title, but it was about attitude adjustment. If I remember, I believe that Jerry Reed was one of the singers who helped it to gain popularity. It was all about the attitude which gets out of adjustment, and needs a new adjustment.

The heart is like that. It often gets out of tune with God and needs an adjustment to bring it back into tune. Sort of like the battery radios were in the “good ole days.” The old radios had a tendency to drift a little and the band tuner had to be moved slightly to get it back on the station it was supposed to be on. After all, the heart must be in tune with God in order for fellowship with God to be a reality. Without this fellowship, there is no spiritual blessedness from God. Material blessedness is an option for every person. But spiritual blessedness depends first upon the heart being in tune with God. The Bible does not use the word tune, but rather it uses the word agree. We read in Amos 3:3: “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” Israel thought that they were in fellowship with God, but they were holding on to idol gods, instead of acting as if they were the children of God. They were not trying to share God with anyone; rather, they were trying to share their lives with both Almighty God, and false gods. That never works. They get out of tune with God and begin to grow moldy spots on their hearts like cheese that is in the stage of ruining. Their hearts became ruined; reprobate, or worthless. That is what happens when a heart remains out of tune with God for very long.

## **The Necessity of Attitude Adjustments**

Attitude adjustments must be made in order to keep the heart in tune with God. We, like ancient Israel, are too often guilty of

overlooking the importance of keeping our hearts finely tuned with God's will. When the heart begins to lose its sensitivity to God's will, that heart must have an attitude adjustment, or else become completely reprobate. Let me give an example of that.

Some years ago, an institution of learning was led by a man who was envious of others. He lost control of that envy and became paranoid. He turned against friends of that institution, not because they had become enemies of his, or the institutions, but simply because they refused to march in precision to every beat of his little personal drum. At first he ignored them, but that did not prevent them from helping the institution. Their help convinced him that they were out to get him. His next steps were "Behind the scenes" efforts to discredit them. That did not work too well so he enlisted some of his employees in his dirty work of spreading innuendos and even outright misrepresentations.

Because no real efforts to maintain his once purity of heart were apparent, and no efforts to undo any damage done to the reputations he had brought harm to, situations only grew worse. Actions grew more ugly and ridiculous. Finally, the place became recognized by many former friends and allies as a bed of corruption. Many good people were wrongly influenced to participate in that corruption. In giving consent to their actions, those who participated in supporting those actions became as guilty of the sins as those who actually committed them.

Today, that institution, although led by another person, and with some new blood among the employees, remains as corrupt as ever. Why? The influence of that one tainted heart reached out as a ripple in a pond, until it reached to every part of the institution. At that point, it was too late to reform the institution. Corruption will not be reformed because it has no foundation which will accept, or endure reformation. When wrong is allowed to continue, the evil begins to reach out and touch, then capture innocents around it. It begins a small spot on a good heart, and degenerates into a corrupt heart, completely worthless to God.

Now, if we have your attention, we shall offer a few suggestions to maintain a good, pure, and healthy heart. The starting place of acceptability with God is an honest and good heart, so

taught Jesus in the parable of the sower in Matthew chapter thirteen. We assume that one who will give heed to the following suggestions has that kind of heart, and wants to maintain it.

## Some Simple Suggestions

1. Exercise a fully vigilant attitude. According to OED (Oxford's English Dictionary, Unabridged 20 vol. Set) **vigilant** means: "1.A. Wakeful and watchful; keeping steadily on the alert; attentively or closely observant." One who is vigilant is one who is awake and carefully watchful. Vigilance is to be very watchful.

In the material realm, vigilance is necessary to see potential. This writer learned as a lad that vigilance paid off in hunting. Sometimes, in cold weather, only a small wisp of vapor would indicate the presence of game. Or, following a rain, a quick shower of water drops falling from a tree limb could very well indicate a squirrel. Sometimes an almost imperceptible movement might indicate a deer. So much vigilance is demanded of a good hunter that it becomes second nature.

That same type of vigilance will also help prevent harm. Having practiced vigilance from early childhood, it became what some call "second nature." It has helped me avoid some potential harm. Several years ago, Wanda and I stopped at a restaurant late one evening to eat, so that when we arrived home in about an hour, she would not have to hustle up a meal for two tired, sleepy, and hungry mouths. Upon leaving, I noticed a man talking with the cashier. As I paid the check, he eyed my wallet. He then left and I would have thought nothing more about it except when I turned our vehicle toward the exit of the parking lot, I noticed a SUV on the street barely moving. It looked suspicious. Going through that town toward home, they allowed me to pass them. I noticed two men in it, one of them, the man who had eyed my wallet.

As we reached the highway outside of town which would lead us home, I kept my eyes on the SUV for I had observed that they kept a fairly close proximity with us while we were in town. When I would speed up, so would they, when I slowed down, so did

they. I pointed out their actions to Wanda and asked her to not turn around and look, but to keep her eyes on the mirror and watch them for a while. During that era, it was an often occurrence for robbers to pull into driveways behind people arriving home, rob them, then shoot them and leave them dead for someone to find. Neither Wanda nor I could think of the number of the police station in Marianna AR where we were spending the winter that year. With Wyoming plates on our vehicle, we were thought to be easy marks for the two men following us. I told Wanda we would take a shortcut to the house, but not stop. Rather, we would drive directly to the police station where the men might think that I was going in to ask directions. I explained to the policeman on duty at the station what had happened, that the SUV was parked one block away, and if he had one car come upon their rear and another from the direction in which they were headed, he could probably catch two armed men. He made a quick dispatch and it would have worked except a block before he reached the SUV one of the policemen turned his siren on, scaring the two men into leaving at a high speed, and they got away.

The point we want to emphasize is that had it not been for almost a life time of practicing vigilance, Wanda and I probably would have been killed that night by two robbers who may have never been caught. Vigilance, carefully practiced in the spiritual world will help accomplish a spiritual achievement of the same sort. It can help avoid a spiritual death.

In order to observe vigilance about the heart, one must first know the heart. Some, especially those tainted by the philosophy of Calvinism, will say that we can not know our heart. These will appeal to Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” The context of that deceitfulness is the man who trusts in man, and makes flesh his strength, Jeremiah 17:1-9. In the New Testament, we are taught to examine our hearts and to know our selves, 2 Corinthians 13:5 If we can not know our heart, then we can not know self.

If we take the time to search and to know our heart, we can observe when changes begin to occur in our heart. We just have to practice vigilance; watchfulness, carefulness. Some of the signs

of a physical heart problem are sometimes: (1) shortness of breath; (2) recurring pain in specific parts of the body; (3) early fatigue, and sometimes (4) a failing memory as oxygen is carried to the brain in lesser amounts. Let us apply the principles of the physical to the spiritual heart. When the spiritual heart, the inner man, begins to suffer with impurity, one finds that he does not have the breath (wind) to endure spiritual labor without rest as in former times. (2) Pain is often felt as a result of remarks and actions of others, as increasing pride makes one more sensitive to imagined insults. (3) Early fatigue sets in and we just must have some relief from teaching our class, or serving as a deacon, or preacher burnout, or other imagined fatigue. (4) Memory begins to fail us on meetings we are supposed to be in, time for Bible study, or well intentioned actions planned to help someone, or other such things. I knew a younger preacher who got so busy looking at various merchandise in a store that he forgot an appointment to study the Bible with a lost person. Nothing physically wrong with the memory, just a spiritual heart growing impure. Later events proved that assessment to be true.

Examples in both the spiritual and the physical realms could be given in detail and in large numbers. But we should begin to have the picture fixed in our mind by now. Pay the price of vigilance, or pay the price of sin. It is a simple choice.

2. Plan well ahead of the actual last minute need. As in our choice to take a shortcut to our house, and then drive on to the police station, one needs to be able to plan ahead in difficult matters which may well promote impurity of action and of heart. For example, we may be asked by a friend to do something for them which they see nothing at all wrong in doing. But for us to do it, may require efforts which we have a policy against doing. We find ourselves in a difficult spot and we quickly agree to do it. Later, we carefully analyze our situation and decide that to do it is in effect a compromise with specific standards which we have established in our life. What shall we do? Spend a couple of hours explaining to our friend why we can not do as we promised to do for him? Shall we run the risk of being called a covenant breaker?

Shall we compromise this one time and never do it again? What is the best thing for this moment of truth? To refuse to compromise might mean a serious problem for my friendship. To compromise might mean that I will be forced into worse situations later where I might have to compromise a conviction. What to do here?

First, the problem arose when I failed to postpone the decision. I could have said either: I will get back with you on that tomorrow, or, I am sorry, but I have specific personal policies of the conscience which you may, or may not agree with. I must decline to do that. The friend may be disappointed for a moment, but will remain your friend. A false friend will likely either replace your friendship with another, or else gain a new respect for you and deepen his feelings of friendship. Such choices should have been made at my conversion. Nothing should ever interfere with my service to God, or, especially my worship of God, except instances of instances beyond my ability to control making it impossible for me to be faithful in spiritual matters. All need to plan ahead in spiritual matters before the problem ever arises. I faced a similar problem one time in my early life as a child of God, and to avoid hurt feelings did what I thought would not be the best for me spiritually. I promised my Lord, and my self that such would never happen again. My priorities were then established, and remain in position. All Christians need to think through spiritual possibilities and fix their principles of actions according to a good order of priorities. Every single isolated possibility does not have to be specifically considered. But we should know our heart, and our priorities should be solidly fixed to the point that priorities will, in a quick need, determine our actions. With this matter done, a lot of progress has been made in the life of each who has reached this point.

3. With our priorities pretty well in place, let us now examine our value system to make certain that the priorities of life measure up to the standard of God. What do we mean by value system? We mean that system of thought which determines what values we

hold dear.

It does not require a genius to determine very quickly that the word of God is that system of values that we all should hold dear, and fully trust to serve our hearts to the best interests of all parties involved. We are talking about moral values here. Only the word of God holds the key to every right value of life. It is the word of God which is the standard of all moral, ethical, and redemptive right thinking and right doing. These three areas cover the totality of life on earth. These three categories are fully served by the revelation of God for our age; his revelation through his prophet, Jesus Christ, Hebrews 1:1-3.

Obviously, the need to study God's word does not need to be emphasized, except to those who already have a heart problem; to those whose hearts have already become impure to a point where actions are adversely influenced by it. Regular and systematic Bible study should be an established custom before conversion, and it should only become more firmly entrenched in our character after conversion. Once this point is reached, the rest will fall into place along the way as more progress is inevitable in one who is vigilant to study the word of God. At this point another word becomes more obvious in our life: diligence. According to OED, this word means: "1. Constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent application and endeavour; industry, assiduity." again OED says: "b. Assiduity in service; persistent endeavour to please; officiousness." Please note that earnest; sincere and serious efforts, are to be put forth on a continuing basis. No "fly by night" efforts. No quick start and then hasty exit efforts accepted. Only the best intentioned efforts are acceptable. Sincere persistence is the key thought here. Industrious application to a task at hand.

What if every child of God was filled with hearts characterized by the three things emphasized to this point? The world itself could not contain our activities at teaching the gospel to the lost, caring for the needy, and building each other up in the precious faith of Jesus Christ. Idle hands and idle persons would be no more among Christians! We would fill the world with our fervent presence and be known by all people as those truly following Jesus Christ. We would not have to introduce our self to anyone except to say to a stranger, I am a Christian. He would immediately know the character of our person because Christians would

be universally known. The earth would resound with the praise all men would give the Christ, and the worship all God's children would give the heavenly Father. Fractures, and divisions would no longer characterize those who claimed to be disciples, but a oneness of spirit and life would be evident among all who love the Lord and are cautious about the welfare of their heart.

May God hasten the day when such as described herein can become a reality among believers in Christ. If one truly believes that one shall be a part of that scene described.

Keep thy heart with all diligence said Solomon, for out of it are the issues of life. Yes, we need to keep; to guard our heart. Each individual has the responsibility for his/her own heart. You can't keep mine for me, nor I for you. It is a personal, individual responsibility. Let us ensure that our hearts are kept pleasing to the Lord, in order that our actions can take on the same nature as the heart. Thereby, we can one day see God face to face. But in the meantime, we can be at one with God in agreement by tuning our heart to His will.

**138 Amber Lane, Selmer TN 38357**

## Memorials

Memorial gifts are actually eternal flowers that are always in bloom. They both honor the person who is remembered through the gift, and they honor God by the one who gives the gift. They also help carry the gospel through their support of this paper which is mailed to many who do not profess to be Christians, help get the gospel to the lost.

A contribution was recently sent by Melvin and Jean Elliott in memory of **Jim Thompson**.

Due to the bi-monthly printing of this paper, and the early date of mailing the November/December issue, this acknowledgment seems late, but it is on time. Personal acknowledgments are sent very quickly after receipt of the contribution.

# A Parting Word

A great deal has been said in past issues about corruption. Corruption is the result of impurities harbored in the heart until the heart becomes reprobate; worthless. Then, sin is practiced, consented with, and encouraged in many ways by corrupt people. We have been observant enough through life to see hundreds of examples of corruption among the people of God, and observation about how those corruptions came about through heart trouble. We have always sorrowed over those matters, and have steadfastly refused to allow all we have seen and experienced, to harden our heart. We have guarded against cynicism, and have tried to keep a balance of reality and faith in God to prevent consenting with sinners and becoming a part of the problem.

Those who practice sin big time among us know who they are. They may bluff, huff, fire innuendos, and attempt to discredit, and ruin reputations, but that does not relieve guilty consciences. The only cure for guilt is repentance. They can use their media to try to justify themselves and discredit the rest of us, but that still does not relieve the problem of sin. Repentance in a liberal dose is the remedy. There are a handful of elders who are in a position to do something noteworthy in cleaning up a large portion of the corruption. There are some Board Members who could go another big distance in helping. There is no telling how many preachers who could help greatly if only they would quit consenting with sinners. These preachers also know who they are, for the most part.

Purity of heart would bring an immediate repentance on the part of multitudes if it were present. Others would soon see their part in the problems and either repent or be excluded from the fellowship of those of pure hearts. Perhaps this sounds very strong for some, but it is the way set forth in God's word. To the extent congregational discipline is not practiced, to that extent people depart from God by consenting with sinners. Consent with sinners continues until the consenter has become the sinner, practicing what they formerly consented with.

It all started with the heart. God, through David stated it in Psalm One when he said: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in

the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” (Psalm 1:1-2.) Observe please that David states a progression. First, there is the counsel, or word of the wicked. Counsel merely stands for the whole teaching of the ungodly. The ungodly are those with an attitude problem; their mind-set is contrary to the disposition of God. What the ungodly want, and how they think is opposite of what God wants and how God thinks. These are ready with their counsel to others to lead others astray from the path of God. They appeal to the heart; especially to the emotions, and desires.

Next, the one seduced by the ungodly finds himself standing alongside with sinners, perhaps not engaged in the overt actions, but engaged in his mind through consent with sinners. Now, sin does not seem so bad. After all, we just need more love and understanding toward the sinner. The sinner is a good person, just a little misguided. If I have heard that once, it has resounded in my ears a thousand times. There are different kinds of sinners, and some are more hardened than others. But a sinner is one who practices sin. The more practice one gets, the more casual and hardened that one is in the act. After defending the sinner, the one next finds himself sitting in the seat of the sinner. Now, the one who listened to, who consented with, and defended sinners, occupies the place of the scorner; one who holds the truth of God in disdain. Now, life has gone sinful full blown; the deliberate, hardened, scornful practice of sin.

What happened to that “good ole boy” who argued that the sinner is a sincere, good person who may be a little misguided at times. It is like Jake: he is a good fellow except when he gets drunk. Then he is a raging bully. But you have to give him credit, for when he is sober he has a good heart. Not really. Alcohol merely breaks down inhibitions, and allows the person to be what he really is deep in his heart. Alcohol does not make a person do something. It just allows the real person to have his way in actions which he was afraid to commit while sober. Good people, don’t deceive yourselves. A deliberate sinner who scorns God and his truth is a hardened reprobate who hides his true nature when he is at himself. Sin makes one beside themselves: mad! Repentance makes one come to himself and go confess his sins to the heavenly Father. Repentance will lead one to conform his life and get his

actions right with God. Then, can we say of them, “He is a good person. He wants to do the right thing.”

The bottom line is: “Never make an excuse for an action of sin, nor for the one who deliberately does the wrong.” Inadvertent sins; sins of ignorance; sins of weakness in a passion of the moment, are all different from the scornful attitude which holds God and his truth in contempt.” Never consent in heart with the ungodly.



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