

Chapter 2

The Place of the Heart

For the purpose of reaching a fuller understanding of New Testament Worship we will here examine the heart with its attitudes and desires for it is the central focal point of worship i.e. its point of origin.

The Bible clearly identifies the heart as the place where the issues of life originate.

“Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it flow the issues of life.”
(Prov. 4:23).

Your heart and its attitude towards God and your fellowman are one of the key reasons and focal points of Jesus’ ministry and His New Testament Church. As of late it seems that we are more focused on what we should do to be right rather than being right from the heart.

As we begin to look at the heart it will soon become apparent that there are many people under the assumption that they do what they do and it matters little because God knows my heart. Ever heard that phrase before? Well the statement itself is true enough for God truly knows the thoughts and intents of the heart. Yet the more important question still remains, DO WE KNOW OUR OWN HEARTS? Is it possible to fool ourselves? The psalmist David was giving us some insight when he said

*“let the words of my mouth and **the meditations of my heart** be acceptable to the Lord my God.”* (Psalm 19:14) Emphasis mine.

David was checking his heart to make sure it was right before God.

This point needs careful and thorough attention and I pray that the fullness of it will be received into your spirit man. This point of knowing our own heart can bring more benefit to your life than any other truth I know. It is a terrible thing that plagues us and robs us of intimate times with God and fruitful living.

In raising our children my wife and I have found that God does not look at the outward man but He looks at the heart. So if we can train our children's hearts, and not just get their outward appearance to obey, we will be giving them the best opportunity to prosper here and here after. As a minister of the Gospel I feel compelled to help others know their own heart. That is why Worship is so important. If we can know our hearts truthfully without hiding things from ourselves either consciously or unconsciously we will not be surprised on that day when we stand before the Lord. Think of it, wouldn't it be wonderful to stand before the Lord and have a clear assessment of who we are and the condition of our hearts? The key is found in HUMILITY. Humility is also one of the keys to the entranceway into the presence of the Almighty and a subject we will discuss in detail as well a bit later on. Suffice is to say for now that without humility we run the risk of making a false assessment of our own hearts and end up with a shipwrecked faith.

To better understand the heart and it's attitudes lets look at the book of Joshua.

In chapter 5 verse 13 of the Living Bible it says Joshua was sizing up the city of Jericho, meaning he was thinking of strategies to seize it. At this very time the Lord shows up as the Commander in chief of the army of God. Joshua not knowing who he is asked him if he is for Israel or the enemy. Interestingly enough Jesus responds by saying that he is not for them or their enemies. Now some with an Old Testament mentality would find that hard to swallow but the fact is that God would have ALL men to be saved, including Joshua's enemies. Did he not send Jonah to Nineveh for the salvation of those that were there? Were they not the enemies of Israel? After some persuasive circumstances caused him to fulfill Gods' call he went and delivered the message. Jonah of course was not happy with the outcome of the crusade, to his dismay it was a complete success. Joshua had a different response; he falls down and worships the Lord, showing humility of heart.

In my study of these scriptures I was led to a footnote in the Oxford Scofield Reference Bible that gives the Bible definition of some of the variations of the word *sin*. One was the definition of the word trespass. This definition so changed my understanding of the heart and

why we do what we do that it is vital that we understand its meaning. The Bible definition of the word trespass is;

the intrusion of self-will into the sphere of Gods divine authority.

You see at the time the Lord showed up to Joshua he was starting to make his own plan to take the city of Jericho. But Jesus intervened and brought him back in line with doing what God wanted him to do. *He got back to that place by worship, out of a humble heart.* A scenario you will find happens quite often in the Scriptures. As we finish out the story we see Joshua one of the mightiest warriors of the Bible given a plan by God to take the city. The plan included by natural standards one the most ridiculous war plans ever given. Take your army and walk around the city once a day for six days. On the last day walk around it seven times (making yourselves really tired) and then all of you get together and yell real loud. I'm sure it wasn't what Joshua had in mind. Actually God uses this "makes no sense" method quite often. Moses was sent to defeat the greatest army of that time with one other guy and a stick (some plan!). Gideon was sent to war only after reducing his army from 32,000 to 300. The Bible says that God reduced his army so that they would not think they did it in their own strength Judges 7:2.

All these men as you will find upon further study were in an attitude of worship upon receiving the plan. Moses took off his shoes in the presence of God. Joshua did the same. Gideon after hearing a prophetic dream and its interpretation fell down and worshipped. When he got up he said to Israel arise for the Lord has delivered into your hands the host of Midian.

I learned from this definition that the sin of trespass is more prevalent in believers then I ever thought possible. It certainly was in me. You see trying to do something for God without fellowship with him out of a humble heart of worship may actually be trespassing. Remember God does not see as men see but looks at the heart.

True worship can break the power of that hindering force and bring Gods' people to a level of intimacy with Him that will bring such power and unity to the body that no weapon of the enemy will be able to stop a people seeking after Him.

My desire is that the Church would begin to honestly assess their attitude of worship towards Him and not let our self-will intrude into Gods' desire for our lives. God is seeking such people to worship Him.