

Is Thy Heart Right?

by J.C. Ryle

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the critical importance of having a heart that is right in the sight of God, contrasting it with the natural heart that is inherently wrong and unresponsive to spiritual truths.

Scripture: Proverbs 4:23, Jeremiah 17:10, Matthew 15:8, Acts 8:21

Topics: "Spiritual Transformation", "The Importance of the Heart"

Description

J.C. Ryle emphasizes the critical importance of the heart in one's relationship with God, arguing that a heart cannot be deemed good if it does not reflect righteousness in actions and thoughts. He challenges the notion that people can have 'good hearts at the bottom' while neglecting spiritual duties, asserting that true goodness must be evident in one's life. Ryle outlines the characteristics of a wrong heart, which is naturally inclined to evil, and contrasts it with the right heart, which is transformed by the Holy Spirit and exhibits faith, humility, and a desire for holiness. He calls for self-examination and urges individuals to seek a new heart through Christ, warning against complacency in spiritual matters. Ultimately, Ryle encourages believers to remain hopeful and diligent in their faith, looking forward to the day when they will be fully redeemed.

Transcript

"Thy heart is not right in the sight of God"--ACTS 8:21

"A good heart at the bottom!" Such is the sadly common expression used about many persons in this strange world. The persons about whom it is said often give no sign of religion. They are utterly careless, or thoughtless about their souls, to all appearance. They neither read the Bible regularly, nor pray, nor keep the Sunday holy. They seem to think of nothing but amusement, self-indulgence, and the world. Yet these are the persons whose friends are often saying, "Never mind! Do not be too hard on them! They have good hearts at the bottom!" And any one who is not satisfied with this excuse is thought narrow, uncharitable, sour, ill-natured, or unkind.

"A good heart at the bottom!" Such is the whole Christianity of thousands in the present day. On the top of their character there is nothing to be seen but constant attention to the trifling things of time, and utter neglect of the things of eternity--entire devotion to the life that now is, and a complete forgetfulness of the life to come. But you must not find fault! You must not mind what you see at the top! You must believe they are all right at the bottom!

Now, is this common talk about "Good hearts at the bottom" satisfactory? Will the idea bear examination by the light of the Bible? I answer that it will not! It is a great delusion, and a huge fraud, and is ruining many souls. No heart is really good at the bottom when its goodness cannot be seen at the top. No heart deserves to be called good which is not right in the sight of God!

Come now, and let us see what account the Bible gives of a really "good heart." Let us "search the Scriptures," and see if we can find the picture drawn by the unerring hand of the Holy Spirit. I invite every reader of this paper to sit down quietly with me for a few minutes, and hear what God says in "the Word" about the whole question of the heart.

There are three things which I propose to do in order to impress the subject of this paper on the mind of every one who reads it.

I. First, I will show THE IMMENSE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEART IN RELIGION.

II. Secondly, I will show THE HEART THAT IS WRONG IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.

III. Lastly, I will show THE HEART THAT IS RIGHT.

May God bless the whole subject to the soul of every one into whose hands this paper may fall! May the Holy Ghost, without whom preaching and writing can do nothing, apply this paper to many consciences, and make it an arrow to pierce many hearts!

I. In the first place, I will show the immense importance of the heart in religion.

How shall I prove this point? From whence shall I fetch my arguments? I must turn to the Word of God. In questions of this kind it matters nothing what the world thinks right or wrong. There is only one sure test of truth! What saith the Scripture? What is written in the Bible? What is the mind of the Holy Ghost? If we cannot submit our judgments to this infallible umpire, it is useless to pretend that we have any religion at all.

(a) For one thing, the Bible teaches that the heart is that part of us on which the state of our souls depends. "Out of it are the issues of life." (Prov. iv. 23). The reason, the understanding, the conscience, the affections, are all second in importance to the heart. The heart is the man. It is the seat of all spiritual life, and health, and strength, and growth. It is the hinge and turning-point in the condition of man's soul. If the heart is alive to God and quickened by the Spirit, the man is a living Christian. If the heart is dead, and has not the Spirit, the man is dead before God. The heart is the man! Tell me not merely what a man says and professes, and where a man goes on Sunday, and what money he puts in the collecting plate. Tell me, rather, what his heart is, and I will tell you what he is. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." (Prov. xxiii. 7).

(b) For another thing, the Bible teaches that the heart is that part of us at which God especially looks. "Man looketh at the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." (1 Sam. xvi. 7.) "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts." (Prov. xxi. 2.) Man is naturally content with the outward part of religion, with outward morality, outward correctness, outward regular use of means of grace, outward attendance at the Lord's Table. But the eyes of the Lord God look much further. He regards our motives. He "weigheth the spirits." (Prov. xvi. 2.) "By Him actions are weighed." (1 Sam. ii. 3.) He says Himself, "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins." (Jer. xvii. 10.)

(c) For another thing the Bible teaches that the heart is the first and foremost thing which God asks man to give Him. "My son," He says, "give me thine heart." (Prov. xxiii. 26.) We may give God a bowed head and a serious face, our bodily presence in His house, and a loud Amen. But until we give God our heart, we give Him nothing at all. The sacrifices of the Jews in Isaiah's time were many and costly. They drew nigh to God with their mouth, and honoured Him with their lips. But their religion was wholly useless, because the heart of the worshippers was wrong. "In vain do they worship Me--their heart is far from Me." (Matt. xv. 8, 9.) The zeal of Jehu against idolatry was very great, and his services in pulling down idols brought him many temporal rewards. But there was one great blot on his character which spoiled all. He did not walk in the law of God "with all his heart." (2 Kings x. 31.) The heart is what the husband desires to have in his wife, the parent in his child, and the master in his servant. And the heart is what God desires to have in professing Christians.

What is the heart in man's body? It is the principal and most important organ in the whole frame. A man may live many years in spite of fevers, wounds, and loss of limbs. But a man cannot live if you injure his heart. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the fountain of life to the soul.

What is the root to the tree? It is the source of all life, and growth, and fruitfulness. You may cut off the branches, and wound the trunk, and the tree may yet survive. But if you hurt the root, the tree will die. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the root of life to the soul.

What is the mainspring to the watch? It is the cause of all its movements, and the secret of all its usefulness. The case may be costly and beautiful. The face and figures may be skilfully made. But if there is anything wrong with the mainspring the works will not go. Just so it is with the heart in religion. It is the mainspring of life to the soul.

What is the fire to the steam engine? It is the cause of all its motion and power. The machinery may be properly made. Every joint, and crank, and valve, and rod, and pipe, and bolt, and screw, may be well made, and in its right place. But if the furnace is cold, and the water in the boiler is not turned into steam, the engine will do nothing. Just so is it with the heart in religion. Unless the heart is lighted with fire from on high, the soul will not move.

Would you know the reason why such multitudes around you take no interest in religion? Many, alas! have no real concern about God, or Christ, or the Bible, or heaven, or hell, or judgment, or eternity. They care for nothing but what they shall eat, or what they shall drink, or what they shall put on, or what money they can get, or what pleasure they can have. It is their hearts which are in fault! They have not the least appetite for the things of God. They are destitute of any taste or inclination for spiritual things. They need a new mainspring. They want a new heart. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart unto it." (Prov. xvii. 16).

Would you know the reason why so many hear the Gospel year after year, and yet remain unmoved by it? Their minds seem like Bunyan's "Slough of despond." Cartloads of good instruction are poured into them without producing any good effect. Their reason is convinced. Their head assents to the truth. Their conscience is sometimes pricked. Their feelings are sometimes roused. Why then do they stick fast? Why do they tarry? It is their hearts which are in fault! Some secret idol chains them down to the earth, and keeps them tied hand and foot, so that they cannot move. They want a new heart. Their picture is drawn faithfully by Ezekiel, "They sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness." (Ezek. xxxiii.

31).

Would you know the reason why thousands of so-called Christians will be lost at last, and perish miserably in hell? They will not be able to say that God did not offer salvation to them. They will not be able to plead that there was no forgiveness of sins provided, and that Christ did not send them invitations. Oh no! They will be obliged to confess that "all things were ready" for them except their own hearts (Luke xiv. 17). Their own hearts will prove to have been the cause of their ruin! The lifeboat was alongside the wreck, but they would not enter it. Christ "would" have gathered them, but they "would not" be gathered (Matt. xxiii. 37). Christ would have saved them, but they would not be saved. They loved darkness more than light. Their hearts were in fault. They would not come to Christ, that they might have life (John v. 40).

I leave this branch of my subject. I trust I have enough to show every reader of this paper the said immense importance of the heart in religion. Surely I have good reason for pressing a plain question on every one into whose hands this paper may come:--Is thy heart right? Is it right in the sight of God? Is it a good heart?

II. I will show, in the second place, the heart that is wrong in the sight of God. There are only two sorts of hearts; a right one and a wrong one. What is a wrong heart like?

The wrong heart is the natural heart with which we are all born. There are no hearts which are right by nature. There are no such things as naturally "good hearts." Ever since Adam and Eve fell, and sin entered into the world, men and women are born with an inclination to evil. Every natural heart is wrong. If your heart has never been changed by the Holy Ghost since you were born, know this day, that your heart is wrong.

What does the Scripture say about the natural heart? It says many things which are deeply solemn, and painfully true. It says that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." (Jer. xvii. 9.) It says that "every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually." (Gen. vi. 5.) It says that "the heart of the sons of men is full of evil." (Eccles. ix. 3.) It says that "From within, out of the heart of men" (as out of a fountain), "proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within." (Mark vii. 21.) Truly this is a humbling picture! The seeds of these things are in the heart of every little baby, when it is born into the world. Babies are not "angels," as some people foolishly call them. Surely I may well tell you that the natural heart is wrong.

But is there no one common mark of the wrong heart, which is to be seen in all whom God has not changed? Yes! there is; and to that common mark of the wrong heart I now request your attention. There is a most striking and instructive figure of speech, which the Holy Ghost has thought fit to use; in describing the natural heart He calls it a "stony heart." (Ezek. xi. 19.) I know no emblem in the Bible so full of instruction, and so apt and fitting as this one. A truer word was never written than that which calls the natural heart a "heart of stone." Mark well what I am going to say; and may the Lord give you understanding!

(a) A stone is hard. All people know that. It is unyielding, unbending, unimpressible. It may be broken, but it will never bend. The proverb is world-wide, "as hard as a stone." Look at the granite rocks which line the Land's End, on the coast of Cornwall. For four thousand years the waves of the Atlantic ocean have dashed against them in vain. There they stand in their old hardness, unbroken and unmoved. It is just the same with the natural heart. Afflictions, mercies, losses, crosses, sermons, counsels, books, tracts,

speaking, writing,--all, all are unable to soften it. Until the day that God comes down to change it, it remains unmoved. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

(b) A stone is cold. There is a chilly, icy feeling about it, which you know the very moment you touch it. It is utterly unlike the feeling of flesh, or wood, or even earth. The proverb is in every one's mouth, "As cold as a stone." The old busts and statues in Helmingham Church have heard the substance of many tracts I have written in days gone by. Yet they never showed any feeling! Not a muscle of their marble faces ever shrank or moved. It is just the same with the natural heart. It is utterly destitute of spiritual feeling. It cares less for the story of Christ's death on the cross, than it does for the last new novel, or the last debate in Parliament, or the account of a railway accident, or a shipwreck, or a murder, or a divorce. Until God sends fire from heaven to warm it, the natural heart of man has no feeling about religion. Well may it be called the heart of stone!

(c) A stone is barren. You will reap no harvest off rocks of any description. You will never fill your barns with corn from the top of Snowdon, or Skiddaw, or Ben Nevis. You will never reap wheat on granite or slate,--on limestone or trap-stone,--on oolite or sandstone,--on flint or on chalk. You may get good crops on Norfolk sands, or Cambridgeshire fens, or Suffolk clay, by patience, labour, money, and good farming. But you will never get a crop worth a farthing off a stone. It is just the same with the natural heart. It is utterly barren of penitence, or faith, or love, or fear, or holiness, or humility. Until God breaks it up, and puts a new principle in it, it bears no fruit to God's praise. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

(d) A stone is dead. It neither sees, nor hears, nor moves, nor grows. Show it the glories of heaven, and it would not be pleased. Tell it of the fires of hell, and it would not be alarmed. Bid it flee from a roaring lion, or an earthquake, and it would not stir. The Bass Rock and Mount Blanc are just what they were 4000 years ago. They have seen kingdoms rise and fall, and they remain utterly unchanged. They are neither higher, nor broader, nor larger than they were when Noah left the ark. It is just the same with the natural heart. It has not a spark of spiritual life about it. Until God plants the grace of the Holy Ghost in it, it is dead and motionless about real religion. Well may the natural heart be called a heart of stone!

The wrong heart is now set before every reader of this paper. Look at it. Think about it. Examine yourself by the light of the picture I have drawn. Perhaps your heart has never yet been changed. Perhaps your heart is still just as it was when you were born. If so; remember this day what I tell you. **YOUR HEART IS WRONG IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.**

Would you know the reason why it is so difficult to do good in the world? Would you know why so few believe the Gospel, and live like true Christians? The reason is, the hardness of man's natural heart. He neither sees nor knows what is for his good. The wonder, to my mind, is not so much that few are converted, as the miraculous fact that any are converted at all. I do not marvel when I see, or hear of, unbelief. I remember the natural heart is wrong.

Would you know the reason why the state of men is so desperately helpless, if they die in their sins? Would you know why ministers feel so fearful about every one who is cut off unprepared to meet God? The reason is, the hardness of man's natural heart. What would a man do in heaven, if he got there, with his heart unchanged and like a stone? By which of the saints would he sit down? What pleasure could he take in God's presence and company? Would he enjoy an eternal Sabbath, and endless Hallelujahs? Oh! no! it is vain to conceal it. There can be no real hope about a man's condition, if he dies with his heart

wrong.

I leave this branch of my subject here. Once more I press a plain, searching question upon the conscience of every one who reads this paper. Surely you must allow it is a very serious one. Is thy heart right? Is it right in the sight of God? Is it a good heart?

III. I will now show, in the last place, the right heart. It is a heart of which the Bible contains many pictures. I am going to try to place some of those pictures before you. On a question like this, I want you to observe what God says, rather than what is said by man. Come now, and see the marks and signs of a right heart.

(a) The right and good heart is a "new heart." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26.) It is not the heart with which a man is born, but another heart put in him by the Holy Ghost. It is a heart which has new tastes, new joys, new sorrows, new desires, new hopes, new fears, new likes, new dislikes. It has new views about the soul, and sin, and God, and Christ, and salvation, and the Bible, and prayer, and Sunday, and heaven, and hell, and the world, and holiness. It is like a farm with a new and good tenant. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Cor. v. 17.) Is this heart your own?

(b) The right and good heart is a "broken and a contrite heart." (Psalm li. 17.) It is broken off from pride, self-conceit, and self-righteousness. Its former high thoughts of self are cracked, shattered, and shivered to atoms. It thinks itself guilty, unworthy, and corrupt. Its former stubbornness, heaviness, and insensibility have thawed, disappeared, and passed away. It no longer thinks lightly of offending God. It is tender, sensitive, and jealously fearful of running into sin. (2 Kings xxii. 19.) It is humble and lowly, and sees in itself no good thing. Is this heart your own?

(c) A right and good heart is a heart that believes on Christ alone for salvation, and in which Christ dwells by faith. (Rom. x. 10; Ephes. iii. 17.) It rests all its hopes of pardon and eternal life on Christ's atonement, Christ's mediation, and Christ's intercession. It is sprinkled in Christ's blood from an evil conscience. (Heb. x. 22.) It turns to Christ as the compass needle turns to the north. It looks to Christ for daily peace, mercy, and grace, as the sunflower looks to the sun. It feeds on Christ for its daily sustenance, as Israel fed on the manna in the desert. It sees in Christ a special fitness to supply all its wants and requirements. It leans on Him, hangs on Him, builds on Him, cleaves to Him, as its physician, guardian, husband, and friend. Is this heart your own?

(d) A right and good heart is a purified heart. (Acts xv. 9; Matt. v.8.) It loves holiness and hates sin. It strives daily to cleanse itself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. (2 Cor. vii. 1.) It abhors that which is evil, and cleaves to that which is good. (Rom. xii. 9.) It delights in the law of God, and has that law engraven on it, that it may not forget it. (Psalm cxix. 11.) It longs to keep the law more perfectly, and takes pleasure in those who love the law. It loves God and man. Its affections are set on things above. It never feels so light and happy as when it is most holy; and it looks forward to heaven with joy, as the place where perfect holiness will at length be attained. Is this heart your own?

(e) A right and good heart is a praying heart. It has within it "the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." (Rom. viii. 15.) Its daily feeling is, "Thy face, Lord, will I seek." (Psalm xxvii. 8.) It is drawn by an habitual inclination to speak to God about spiritual things,--weakly, feebly, and imperfectly perhaps, but speak it must. It finds it necessary to pour out itself before God, as before a friend, and to spread before Him all its wants and desires. It tells Him all its secrets. It keeps back nothing from Him. You might as well try to persuade a man to live without breathing, as to persuade the possessor of a right heart to live without praying. Is this heart your own?

(f) A right and good heart is a heart that feels within a conflict. (Gal. v.17.) It finds within itself two opposing principles contending one with another for the mastery,--the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh. It knows by experience what St. Paul means when he says, "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind." (Rom. vii. 23.) The wrong heart knows nothing of this strife. The strong man armed keeps the wrong heart as his palace, and his goods are at peace. (Luke xi. 21.) But when the rightful King takes possession of the heart, a struggle begins which never ends till death. The right heart may be known by its warfare, quite as much as by its peace. Is this heart your own?

(g) Last, but not least, the right and good heart is honest, and single, and true. (Luke viii. 15; 1 Chron. xii. 33; Heb. x. 22.) There is nothing about it of falsehood, hypocrisy, or part-acting. It is not double or divided. It really is what it professes to be, feels what it professes to feel, and believes what it professes to believe. Its faith may be feeble. Its obedience may be very imperfect. But one thing will always distinguish the right heart. Its religion will be real, genuine, thorough, and sincere. Is this heart your own?

A heart such as that which I have now described, has always been the possession of all true Christians of every name, and nation, and people, and tongue. They have differed from one another on many subjects, but they have all been of a "right heart." They have some of them fallen for a season, like David and Peter, but their hearts have never entirely departed from the Lord. They have often proved themselves to be men and women laden with infirmities, but their hearts have been right in the sight of God. They have understood one another on earth. They have found that their experience was everywhere one and the same. They will understand each other even better in the world to come. All that have had "right hearts" upon earth, will find that they have "one heart" when they enter heaven.

The "right heart" is now before every one who reads this paper. Once more I press my question on your conscience. Is thy heart right? Is it right in the sight of God?

I shall now wind up the whole subject with a few words of practical application. I want to bring home the points I have set forth in this paper to every one into whose hands it may fall. I want every reader to lay it down with a thorough understanding of his own immediate duty. I want every reader to say, "How does this touch me? How does this apply to the state of my own soul?" May God the Holy Ghost make the words I am going to write, words in season to all who read them!

1. My first duty is to offer to every reader of this paper, a question to promote self enquiry. I ask you plainly this day, "What is your heart? Is your heart right or wrong? Is it a really good heart?"

I know not who you are whose eyes are reading these pages. But I do know that self-examination cannot do you any harm. If your heart is right, it will be a comfort to know it. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God." (1 John iii. 21.) But if your heart is wrong, it is high time to find it out, and seek a change. The time is short. The night cometh when no man can work. Say to yourself this very day, "Is my heart right or wrong?"

Think not to say within yourself,--"There is no need for such questions as these. There is no need to make such ado about the heart. I go to church or chapel regularly. I live a respectable life. I hope I shall prove right at last."--Beware of such thoughts, I beseech you,--beware of them, if you would ever be saved. You may go to the best church on earth, and hear the best preachers. You may be the best of churchmen, or the soundest member of a chapel. But all this time if your heart is not "right in the sight of God," you are on the high road to destruction. Settle down to quiet consideration of the question before you. Look it manfully in the face, and do not turn aside. Is your heart right or wrong?

Think not to say within yourself,--"No one can know what his heart is. We must hope the best. No one can find out with any certainty the state of his own soul." Beware, I say again,--beware of such thoughts. The thing can be known. The thing can be found out. Deal honestly and fairly with yourself. Set up an assize on the state of your inward man. Summon a jury. Let the Bible preside as judge. Bring up the witnesses. Inquire what your tastes are,--where your affections are placed,--where your treasure is,--what you hate most,--what you love most,--what pleases you most,--what grieves you most. Inquire into all those points impartially, and mark what the answers are. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. vi. 21.) A tree may always be known by its fruit, and a true Christian may always be discovered by his habits, tastes, and affections. Yes! you may soon find out what your heart is, if you are honest, sincere, and impartial. Is it right or wrong?.

Think not to say within yourself, "I quite approve of all you say, and hope to examine the state of my heart some day. But I have no time just at present. I cannot find leisure. I wait for a convenient season." Oh! beware of such thoughts,--again I say, beware. Life is uncertain, and yet you talk of a convenient season. Eternity is close at hand, and yet you talk of putting off preparation to meet God. Alas! that habit of "putting off" is the everlasting ruin of millions of souls. Wretched man that you are! who shall deliver you from this devil of "putting off?" Awake to a sense of duty. Throw off the chains that pride, and laziness, and love of the world are weaving round you. Arise and stand upon your feet, and look steadily at the question before you. Churchman or dissenter, I ask you this day,--Is your heart right or wrong?

I leave my question with you, and entreat you to consider it well. I pray that the Holy Ghost may apply it with Almighty power to your conscience. The first step in religion is to know yourself.

2. My next duty is to offer a solemn warning to all who know their hearts are wrong, but have no desire to change. I do it with every feeling of kindness and affection. I have no wish to excite needless fears. But I know not how to exaggerate the danger of your condition. I warn you that if your heart is wrong in the sight of God you are hanging over the brink of hell. There is but a step between you and everlasting death.

Can you really suppose that any man or woman will ever enter heaven without a right heart? Do you flatter yourself that any unconverted person will ever be saved? Away with such a miserable delusion! Cast it from you at once and forever. What saith the Scripture? "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (John iii. 3; Matt. xviii. 3; Heb. xii. 14.) It is not enough to have our sins pardoned, as many seem to suppose. There is another thing wanted as well as a pardon, and that thing is a new heart. We must have the Holy Spirit to renew us, as well as Christ's blood to wash us. Both renewing and washing are needful before any one can be saved.

Can you suppose for a moment that you would be happy in heaven, if you entered without a right heart? Away with the miserable delusion! Cast it from you at once and for ever! You must have a "meetness for the inheritance of the saints," before you can enjoy it. (Col. i. 12.) Your tastes must be tuned and brought into harmony with those of saints and angels, before you can delight in their company. A sheep is not happy when it is thrown into the water. A fish is not happy when it is cast on dry land. And men and women would not be happy in heaven if they entered heaven without "right hearts."

My warning is before you. Harden not your heart against it. Believe it. Act upon it. Turn it to account. Awake and arise to newness of life without delay. One thing is very certain. Whether you hear the warning or not, God will not go back from what He has said. "If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful: He cannot

deny Himself." (2 Tim. ii. 13.)

3. My next duty is to offer advice to all who know their hearts are wrong, but desire to have them made right. That advice is short and simple. I advise you to apply at once to the Lord Jesus Christ, and ask for the gift of the Holy Ghost. Entreat Him, as a lost and ruined sinner, to receive you, and supply the wants of your soul. I know well that you cannot make your own heart right. But I know that the Lord Jesus Christ can. And to the Lord Jesus Christ I entreat you to apply without delay.

If any reader of this paper wants a really good and right heart, I thank God that I can give him good encouragement. I thank God that I can lift up Christ before you, and say boldly, Look at Christ,--Seek Christ,--Go to Christ. For what did that blessed Lord Jesus come into the world? For what did He give His precious body to be crucified? For what did He die and rise again? For what did He ascend up into heaven and sit down at the right hand of God? For what did Christ do all this but to provide complete salvation for poor sinners like you and me,--salvation from the guilt of sin, and salvation from the power of sin, for all who believe? Oh! yes, Christ is no half Saviour. He "has received gifts for men, even for the rebellious." (Psalm lxxviii. 18.) He waits to pour out the Spirit on all who will come to Him. (Prov. i. 23.) Mercy and grace--pardon and a new heart,--all this the Lord Jesus is ready to apply to you by His Spirit if you will only come to Him. Then come, come without delay to Christ.

What is there that Christ cannot do? He can create. By Him were all things made at the beginning. He called the whole world into being by His command.--He can quicken. He raised the dead when He was on earth, and gave back life by a word.--He can change. He has turned sickness into health and weakness into strength,--famine into plenty, storm into calm, and sorrow into joy.--He has wrought thousands of miracles on hearts already. He turned Peter the unlearned fisherman into Peter the Apostle,--Matthew the covetous publican into Matthew the Gospel writer,--Saul the self-righteous Pharisee into Paul the Evangelist of the world. And Christ is not changed. What Christ has done once Christ can do again. Christ and the Holy Ghost are always the same. There is nothing in your heart that the Lord Jesus cannot make right. Only come to Christ.

If you had lived in Palestine, in the days when Jesus was upon earth, you would have sought His help if you had been sick. If you had been crushed down by some sore bodily disease in some back lane of Capernaum, or in some cottage by the blue waters of the sea of Galilee, you would surely have gone to Jesus for a cure. You would have sat by the way-side day after day waiting for His appearance. You would have sought Him, if He did not happen to come near your dwelling, and never rested till you found Him. Oh! why not do the same this very day for the sickness of your soul? Why not apply at once to the Great Physician in heaven, and ask Him to "take away the stony heart, and give you a heart of flesh?" (Ezek. xi. 19.) Once more invite every reader, high or low, rich or poor, old or young. If you want "a right and good heart," do not waste time in trying to make it right by your own strength. It is far beyond your power to do it. Come to the Great Physician of souls. Come at once to Jesus Christ.

4. My last duty is to offer an exhortation to all whose hearts have been made right in the sight of God. I offer it as a word in season to all true Christians. Hear me, believing brother or sister. I speak especially to you.

(a) Is your heart right? then be thankful. Praise the Lord for His distinguishing mercy, in "calling you out of darkness into His marvellous light." (1 Peter ii. 9.) Think what you were by nature. Think what has been done for you by free undeserved grace. Your heart may not be all that it ought to be, nor yet all that you

hope it will be. But at any rate your heart is not the old hard heart with which you were born. Surely the man whose heart is changed ought to be full of praise.

(b) Is your heart right? then be humble and watchful. You are not yet in heaven, but in the world. You are in the body. The devil is near you, and never sleeps. Oh! keep your heart with all diligence. Watch and pray lest you fall into temptation. Ask Christ Himself to keep your heart for you. Ask Him to dwell in it, and reign in it, and garrison it, and to put down every enemy under His feet. Give the keys of the citadel into the King's own hands, and leave them there. It is a weighty saying of Solomon, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool." (Prov. xxviii. 26.)

(c) Is your heart right? then be hopeful about the hearts of other people. Who has made you to differ? Why should not any one in the world be changed, when such an one as you has been made a new creature? Work on. Pray on. Speak on. Write on. Labour to do all the good you can to souls. Never despair of any one being saved so long as he is alive. Surely the man who has been changed by grace ought to feel that there are no desperate cases. There are no hearts which it is impossible for Christ to cure.

(d) Is your heart right? Then do not expect too much from it. Do not be surprised to find it weak and wayward, faint and unstable, often ready to doubt and fear. Your redemption is not complete until your Lord and Saviour comes again. Your full salvation remains yet to be revealed. (Luke xxi. 28; 1 Peter i. 5.) You cannot have two heavens, a heaven here and a heaven hereafter, changed, renewed, converted, sanctified, as your heart is, you must never forget that it is a man's heart after all, and that of a man living in the midst of a wicked world.

After all our best things are yet to come in the day when Christ "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation." (Heb. ix. 28.) One of our best things in that day will be a really perfect and good heart. In the life that now is we often "groan being burdened." (2 Cor. v.4.) In the life to come we shall at last serve God without weakness and defect. Surely every believing reader who feels "the plague of his own heart" should often look onward and forward to the day of Christ's second coming. A time draws near when Satan shall be bound, and Christ's saints shall be changed,--when sin shall no more vex us, and the sight of sinners shall no more sadden our minds,--when believers shall at length attend on God without distraction, and love Him with a perfect heart. For that day let us wait, and watch, and pray. It cannot be very far off. The night is far spent. The day is at hand. Surely if our hearts are right, we ought often to cry, "Come quickly, come, Lord Jesus." (Rev. xxii. 20.)

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