

Text: Various

Title: The Heart: Loving God

Truth: God's people are expected to love Him with their whole selves.

Date/Location: July 28, 2024 and August 4, 2024 (bottom p. 6) at FBC

Introduction

Previously we spent several weeks focused on the topic of Christian thinking. We will call this the “head” matter. As we consider serving God, there are the other matters of the heart and of the hands. Perhaps you have heard these three put together with the helpful alliteration **head, heart, and hands**.

This message concerns the heart.

I. Deuteronomy and the Gospels on Loving God

A. Let these verses soak in to your bones a little bit. The fact that they are repeated so often and in both Old and New Testaments...

Deut 6:5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

Deut 10:12 “And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deut 11:13 ‘And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,

Deut 11:22 “For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him—

Deut 13:3 you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deut 19:9 and if you keep all these commandments and do them, which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and to walk always in His ways, then you shall add three more cities for yourself besides these three,

Deut 30:6 And the Lord your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, **to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul**, that you may live.

Josh 22:5 But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Matt 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸ This is *the* first and great commandment. ³⁹ And *the* second is like it: ‘*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*’ ⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.”

Mark 12:30 And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.

Luke 10:27 So he answered and said, “ ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind,’ and ‘your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to **those who love God**, to those who are called according to His purpose.

B. Now ponder what it means to love God with all of your heart, soul, strength, mind. This is a *synecdoche*, which is a manner of speaking where the part stands for the whole. In this case, we have three (or four) parts of our being which are components of the whole but the meaning is our entire person.

Synecdoche: a figure of speech in which a part of something stands for the whole of that thing. “You need to get some new wheels.” That usually does *not* mean that you need to get four new

round metal objects to mount tires onto and then install on your car. It means that you need to get a whole new car!

This is a subset of a larger class of figures of speech call **metonymy**.

This figure of speech speaks of one thing using the name of another related thing, but not necessarily a part of it. If you are telling the story of how you were at a baseball game, you might say, “We were cheering for Detroit.” This does *not* mean that you are rooting for the legal entity known as the city of Detroit, nor that you were cheering on the citizens of the city. It means that you were cheering for the Detroit Tigers.

This is emphasized with the repetition of the word *all*.

Since God wishes for us to love Him with all of those *parts* of our being, what he means is that we are to love Him with our *whole* being, body and spirit, not just certain parts of us. Do you accept that?

Suppose we try to limit our love for God by saying, “Well, it is only in the heart, soul, mind, and strength that He requires our love. But I do not have to love him with my will, affections, emotions, soul, passions, spirit, etc.” That attitude violates the clear intention of the doctrine, which is simply stated in the passage:

God’s people are expected to love Him with their whole lives.

C. What exactly is the heart? How is it different than the mind? We know that the heart as a muscle does not possess thinking capacity. If a person gets a heart transplant, they are still the same person. I do not know what would happen if someone got a brain transplant!

But commonly we speak of the heart “sinking” when we are faced with bad news because something in our torso seems to change or move. Our heart is light and joyful when we are excited or experience something very good. It skips a beat when something either great or terrible happens. This all is a reminder that our physical being is connected to our spiritual being.

The heart is a metaphor for the very center of our being. It is our control center. It is where we really live, who we really are, what

we really like, what we cherish and value. It is where our desires arise, and where our affections reside. To that notion we now turn.

II. Introduce the Term *Affections*

A. Jonathan Edwards's "focus on religious affections, 'the vigorous and sensible exercises' of the heart, prompted Edwards to expect religion to influence both the heart and the mind.¹ In the same magazine, another author defines the affections as "heartfelt convictions." Edwards was concerned that these affections not be raised by superficial means lest they not last.

The preaching of an itinerant evangelist such as George Whitefield could be of very good use, but if it created only temporary changes in the person's thoughts and heart, it lacked something critical. In his pastoral ministry Edwards hoped to see perseverance which would demonstrate true faith.

His writing on *The Religious Affections* was an expansion on his *The Distinguishing Marks* of real revival. In it, he taught that "True believers...were those who: (1) loved Christ, (2) loved His truth, (3) loved the Word of God, (4) loved other believers while (5) hating the sin they found in their own lives."²

Again, these affections are "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul." They are not mere experiences, which may or may not indicate conversion. They are not emotions either, which are transient. They are part of the whole duty of the Christian in terms of holy living both externally and internally. **These affections concern how our souls incline toward the things of God.** Our inclinations and interests center around our own selves before we are saved. After salvation, our inclinations move decidedly Godward and as we grow, our inclinations become more and more centered upon God.

¹ Richard A. Bailey, "[Devoted Disciplinarian](#)," *Christian History Magazine-Issue 77: Jonathan Edwards: Puritan Pastor & Theologian* (Carol Stream, IL: Christianity Today, 2002).

² Pastor Matthew Everhard, <https://edwardsstudies.com/2016/03/23/book-review-brief-the-religious-affections/>

This is what I am getting at when I talk about our hearts loving God.

- B. Other Christian affections are hope, desire toward God, love for God's word, reverence for God, thankfulness, compassion, mercy, abiding joy, personal holiness, submission to God's authority, conviction of sin, real repentance, etc. They have to do with our inclinations. When saved, we change inwardly, and outwardly.

"From what has been said, it is manifest that Christian practice, or a holy life, is a great and distinguishing sign of true and saving grace. But I may go further and assert that it [Christian practice/holy life] is the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences" (Edwards, p. 326-32).

- C. Consider some verses that have to do with that word "incline." Somewhat surprisingly to me, it only occurs in the Old Testament.

Num 15:39 And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that **you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined,**

Deut 31:21 Then it shall be, when many evils and troubles have come upon them, that this song will testify against them as a witness; for it will not be forgotten in the mouths of their descendants, for **I know the inclination of their behavior today,** even before I have brought them to the land of which I swore to give them."

Josh 24:23 "Now therefore," he said, "put away the foreign gods which are among you, and **incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.**"

Judg 9:3 And his mother's brothers spoke all these words concerning him in the hearing of all the men of Shechem; and **their heart was inclined to follow Abimelech,** for they said, "He is our brother."

1 Kings 8:57-58 The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, **that He may incline**

our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers.

Ps 78:1 Give ear, O my people, to my law; **Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.**

Ps 119:36 **Incline my heart to Your testimonies, And not to covetousness.**

Ps 119:112 **I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes** Forever, to the very end.

Ps 141:4 **Do not incline my heart to any evil thing**, to practice wicked works With men who work iniquity; And do not let me eat of their delicacies.

Prov 2:2 So that you **incline your ear to wisdom**, And apply your heart to understanding;

Prov 4:20 My son, give attention to my words; **incline your ear to my sayings.**

Prov 5:13 (the feeling of regret) I have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, **nor inclined my ear to those who instructed me!**

Prov 22:17 Incline your ear and hear the words of the wise, and apply your heart to my knowledge;

Isa 55:3 **Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live;** And I will make an everlasting covenant with you— The sure mercies of David.

Jer 7:23-24 But this command I gave them: ‘Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people. And walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you.’ **Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts**, and went backward and not forward.

Jer 7:26 **Yet they did not obey Me or incline their ear, but stiffened their neck.** They did worse than their fathers.

Jer 11:8 **Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but everyone followed the dictates of his evil heart;** therefore I will bring

upon them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but which they have not done.’ ”

Jer 17:23 **But they did not obey nor incline their ear, but made their neck stiff**, that they might not hear nor receive instruction.

Jer 25:4 And the Lord has sent to you all His servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, **but you have not listened nor inclined your ear to hear**.

Jer 34:14 “At the end of seven years let every man set free his Hebrew brother, who has been sold to him; and when he has served you six years, you shall let him go free from you.” **But your fathers did not obey Me nor incline their ear**.

Jer 35:15 I have also sent to you all My servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, ‘Turn now everyone from his evil way, amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them; then you will dwell in the land which I have given you and your fathers.’ **But you have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed Me**.

Jer 44:5 **But they did not listen or incline their ear to turn from their wickedness**, to burn no incense to other gods.

III. What Affects the Heart

- A. The sins of others can cause you to have sorrow of heart, as in Nehemiah 2:2.
- B. Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Prov. 13:12). Hannah was an example: she hoped for a child, but none was forthcoming. She spoke in her heart to God (1 Sam. 1:13).
- C. Psalm 35:13 records David’s expression of sadness when his enemies were sick, showing real human compassion.
- D. Newly revealed information, particularly from God, brought a deep effect upon Daniel’s thoughts, which troubled him and made him nigh to sick (Daniel 7:28).
- E. Our sins cause our hearts much trouble.

Isaiah 1:5-6 Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, And the whole heart faints....

Jer 4:14 O Jerusalem, **wash your heart from wickedness**, That you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?

Mark 7:21 explains that the heart is the fount of all evil thoughts, murders, etc.

Rom 1:21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish **hearts were darkened**.

Eph 4:18 having their **understanding darkened**, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the **blindness of their heart**.

Genesis 6:5 Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intent of the thoughts of his heart** was only evil continually.

Matt 6:21 – where your treasure is, your heart will be there too.

Matt 13:15 dull hearts, hard of hearing, closed eyes that do not allow them to perceive the truth of God.

Matt 13:19 the evil one snatches the seed of the word from the hearts of some people.

Matt 19:8 Hardness of heart brings about all kinds of terrible things, for example divorce.

Matthew 24:48 gives the example of an evil servant who “says in his heart.” Mark 2:6 speaks about “reasoning in their hearts.” Luke 1:51 the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

Mark 3:5 Jesus was angered and grieved by the hardness of their hearts—evil people.

Can believers have hard hearts sometimes?

Yes, in Mark 8:17 when the disciples did not understand what the Lord was saying.

Mark 11:23 speaks about doubts in our hearts as to God answering prayer.

Luke 24:25 exposes that believers can be slow of heart to believe.

2 Cor. 3:15 a veil remains over the hearts of those who hear God's word but do not believe it.

Other Verses on the Heart

God desires a **loyal heart** (1 Chron. 28:9).

The **Lord searches the heart** (1 Chron. 28:9).

God knows the heart, and Jesus does too (Matt 9:4, Luke 9:47, Acts 1:24, Romans 8:27).

Hearts can be foolish—in those who do not recognize God for who He is (Rom. 1:21).

God's **law is written on the heart** (Rom. 2:15).

Heb 4:12 For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a **discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**.

IV. What the Gospel Does to the Heart

2 Cor. 4:6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

We read earlier Deut 30:6 about God circumcising the Israelites' heart so they would love him with all their heart. Similar in Deut 10:16, Jer. 4:4, Romans 2:29.

Causes us from our hearts to forgive others (Matt 18:35)

The gospel turns our hearts, Luke 1:17.

The gospel changes your heart so that you believe in your heart that God has raised Christ from the dead (Romans 10:9-10).

V. Application and Uses of this Doctrine

A. Do an honest evaluation of where your heart is really inclined. Think of all the things it should be inclined toward.

Then think of all the things that it is inclined toward now but should not be.

Turn away from the inclinations that are evil, useless, not edifying.

B. Plan your life and activities around things that help incline the heart toward spiritual things.

START HERE 8/11/2024 (need to reorganize the below)

C. Speaking of the heart, I was always fascinated with the quest to produce an artificial heart. Back in the 1980s this was a huge thing at the University of Utah with Dr. Robert Jarvik and eventually the Jarvik-7 heart. It was first placed into Dr. Barney Clark, a dentist with end-stage cardiomyopathy. He lived with the artificial heart for 112 days with a lot of complications and eventually died from colitis induced by all the antibiotics he had to receive. About 1,500 people in the last 20 years have received a “TAH” total artificial heart, some living on it as long as four years while waiting for a heart transplant. Today about 15,000 people live with a different sort of mechanical device called an LVAD—left ventricular assist device either permanently or as a bridge to a heart transplant. It flows constantly instead of rhythmically like the natural heart, and so the patient has no pulse!

Think of the tremendous difficulty of designing, building, installing, and operating a device like this. Now think about how difficult it is to change a person’s spiritual heart. It is a reorientation of their thinking. Imagine taking someone from atheism; pro-choice; pro-trans; a false religion;

In some ways it is easier because the miraculous power of God is available to make the transformation, but that is the only power that will get the job done!

D. Think about how your heart “feels” regarding other people in your life. “In his book *The Moderator*, Joseph Caryl explained that the person who “does not confide in his neighbors hinders them from confiding in him, and he that fears others creates in them a fear against himself.” If one thinks the other does not trust him, he “will readily suspect him”. Thus, “if I give way to these thoughts, **I am at war with him in my heart** and the only thing that can foster confidence in him, the affection of Christian love and generous sincerity, is lost between us.” This is exactly how relationships

break down. In our early interactions and as conflict begins, those precious qualities of love and generosity are quickly lost, and from there a relationship is almost impossible to recover.”³

E. Above we mentioned that the Lord searches and knows the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. No one can know it—except for God. He searches the heart and knows how to judge a person because he knows our ways.

Eccl 9:3 the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil

F. This is, of course, why we cannot “follow our hearts.” Our central processing unit is terribly biased, is full of conflicts of interest, and on top of that it is easily self-deceived. In our pre-saved life, it is deceived all the time.

If we wish to find out about our hearts, we need to seek the information from an unbiased source—namely God’s word—not from other hearts that are similarly biased or limited in their understanding of what is going on inside of our inmost being.

G. Our hearts need to be cleansed. Psalm 24:3-4, 51:10, Prov. 20:30, James 4:8. Notice this is what the good news of Jesus *is*: a cleansing agent or work: Acts 15:8-9 (notice how God knows the heart), Heb. 10:22.

H. Matthew 15:19 shows the heart stores up a lot of evil things. Wherever we are on our walk with the Lord, we can fall in any of the ways listed by Jesus in this verse. Let us pray that we not succumb to temptations in these things.

These notes are a work in progress. Expect them to be extended and adapted.

MAP

³ Tim Cooper, <https://www.crossway.org/articles/why-john-owen-and-richard-baxter-didnt-like-each-other/>, emphasis added.