

How About Your Heart?

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Preacher: Dave Rachoy

[0:00] We're going to get your mic. Sorry, I didn't catch you. I didn't catch you. Okay. All right. Some of you will have to turn down your hearing aids now.

! Okay. I'm going to leave that right there. The title I've selected for this sermon today is How About Your Heart. When the Bible speaks about one's heart, it very rarely speaks about your ticker. It very rarely speaks about that, but it's talking about the you of your life. It talks about your personality, your character, your will, your emotions, and the control of those things. That's what the Bible's talking about when it talks about your heart. And so the question of how about your heart is important. And in Proverbs 4.23, Solomon put it this way. Watch over your heart with diligence, for from it flow the issues of life. And so it's an important question for all of us.

[1:14] In Luke chapter 9, verse 23. Would you turn there in your Bibles, please, if you have your Bible with you today? Luke chapter 9, verse 23.

Jesus gave a, Jesus gave a, in an economy of words, he gave a description of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus Christ. He said it this way, chapter 9, verse 23.

And he was saying to them all, if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. And so there's four conditions of the heart, though.

He doesn't use the word heart there, but he's speaking about four conditions of the heart there that are important for us to have, first of all, to be a follower of Jesus Christ, to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The first he says is, if anyone wishes to come after me. Now, how do we come after Jesus? I think that what he's talking about here is having a transformed heart.

[2:22] You know, the Bible says in Jeremiah 17, 9, the heart is deceitful of all things and desperately sick or desperately wicked. Who can know it? And that's where all of our hearts were before we came to know Christ.

And if you've never come to know Christ, this is a challenge for you, too, because that's the way your heart is. Our hearts are sinful, unpleasing to God, and we realize, if we're thinking about it, that there's nothing we can do about it in and of ourselves.

We can't do it by grace, by works. In fact, Paul says, if you're all, you can quote Ephesians 2, 8, and 9, for by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves.

It's the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast. And so, when you come to Christ and when you come after him, as Jesus said there, that's the first place that happens, that's the first thing that happens.

You have to have a transformed heart, and he changes it. He changes it for you. Transformed heart. And Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17, we become new creatures, old things are passed away.

[3:40] Behold, new things have come, and then you have a transformed heart. Now, I'm assuming that most of you who have made that transaction have come to Jesus by grace through faith, have trusted him for your salvation, knowing that you couldn't do it yourself.

And I'm going to stop doing that one of these times, okay? But you know you couldn't do it, and so you have a transformed heart. And Jesus said, if anyone wishes to come after me, that's a transformed heart.

You have done that, and that's a transformed heart. If you haven't, let this be the day that you invite Jesus into your life and trust him. because the next thing Jesus said there is, if anyone comes after me, let him deny himself.

And that means that the process begins for us after our heart is transformed, that God wants to change us in lasting ways, and this is a description of a process of growth that takes place over time.

Somebody once said, you don't become holy in a hurry, and once you become a Christian, you have a transformed heart, but God wants to keep changing it in a lasting way.

[4:56] Leighton Ford once said, God loves you just the way you are, but he loves you way too much to ever leave you that way. And so Jesus said, he must have a humble heart, let him deny himself.

Perhaps you've heard about the person who decided he was going to write a book on humility. He entitled it The Ten Most Humble People in the World and How I Chose the Other Nine. And the project didn't go well because he couldn't find nine other people that are humbled by biblical standards, and then he realized he wasn't either.

Humility is an interesting thing. If you think you have it, you don't. You ever thought of that? If you think you're humble, you don't. If you're bragging to people about your humble humility, then you're not humble.

But the Bible has a lot to say about humility and faith. It's important that we understand that pride and humility are something that's displeasing to God.

Proverbs 21.4 says, Haughty eyes and a proud heart of the lamp of the wicked is sin. And all of us have a tendency, all of us have a tendency to please ourselves.

[6:15] We all want our own way. And that's normal for us as people. But God's gradually changing that. And these are all things in areas in which we grow over time.

And we never stop growing until we're in the presence of the Lord himself. But he wants us to understand Luke chapter 1 verse 52 says, He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has exalted the humble.

James 4.6 says, But he gives greater grace. Therefore, it says, God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. James 4.10, Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and he will exalt you.

1 Peter 5.6 says, Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that he may exalt you at the proper time. So Jesus wanted to make clear that if you're going to be a disciple of his, this is an area you need to be growing in and need to be gradually giving up yourself.

Jesus reserved his greatest criticism for the Pharisees because of this very sin that they had.

[7:30] And in Matthew chapter 23, verse 6 and following, let me just read this to you. They love the place of honor at banquets and the chief seats in the synagogues and respectful greetings in the marketplaces and being called by men, Rabbi, Rabbi, but you are not to be called Rabbi for one is your father, your teacher, and all brothers.

And do not call anyone father for the one is your father and he is in heaven. And do not be called leader for only one is your leader, that is Christ.

But the greatest among you shall be your servant. The greatest among you shall be your servant. And I, you know, I don't know everybody in this church. But I know some of you can probably think about somebody in this church that you would call a servant in this church.

Every church needs a servant. And God's desire is that every one of us have a heart of service like that. A humble heart, let him deny himself.

Paul's example is found in Philippians. And this is when he came to know Christ as his Savior in Philippians chapter 3.

[8:53] Let me get there here. This cord is... Philippians chapter 3, verses 7 through 9, Paul is giving his testimony and he says this.

He's already mentioned now, he's already mentioned who he was in Judaism. He was a Pharisee of Pharisees and all of those things. And he says this, but whatever things were gained to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

More than that, I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, from whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ.

and may be found in him, and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his

sufferings being conformed to his death.

Paul had credentials under Judaism, but when he came to Christ, he came to that point of self-denial. He recognized on the road to Damascus that he was undone, that he couldn't save himself, that as he met the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus, he was going there to, as you recall, to put Christians, followers of the way in jail.

[10:27] And so Paul had to come to an end of himself in Judaism, but then he says here that he gave up having a righteousness of his own derived from the law.

How many times do we fall into the habit of thinking that I can change myself and make myself good? That doesn't happen apart from Jesus Christ in the life of a believer.

Paul said that, I know nothing good dwells in me. And John MacArthur in his commentary on Luke says this, to be a follower of Jesus Christ means to disown one's natural, depraved, sinful self.

It is to give up all dependence on and confidence in oneself and one's work to save. Jesus said, Jesus said, if one would follow me, he must deny himself.

And then he went on to say, back to, back to our text in Luke chapter 2, Luke chapter 9, verse 23, he said, come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily.

[11:50] And that, that means that he's talking about having a sacrificial heart. A sacrificial heart. Take up his cross daily. This means that every one of us, you know, in Ephesians chapter 4 says every one of us is believers in Jesus Christ as a place in ministry.

He's given each one of us a gift. Every one of you has a gift if you've trusted Christ as your Savior. You may not know what it is yet. You may not have had help developing it, but you have a gift.

You have a place in the body of Christ and things aren't going to be, things aren't going to happen in this church or my church or any other church unless each one is, not to reach the full potential, unless each one is carrying out their gift and understanding what it is and doing it.

And each one of us has a place in ministry and we're to do that, we're to exercise that gift no matter what the cost might be.

Submitted to Christ and transformed by grace, we're subject to his call in our lives to serve him, to do what he would have us to do.

[12:59] By referring to cross, by the way, he's not talking about kind of the daily ho-hum struggles of life, but a willingness to suffer for Christ and for his sake and for the work that he has called us to do.

The prosperity gospel that some teach that we should all be healthy and wealthy and trouble-free has no place in the Christian life.

God calls us to sacrifice ourselves for him in such a way that we accept what the world comes against us with. James 1, verses 2-4 says, Consider it all joy, my brethren.

That sounds kind of contradictory, doesn't it? Consider it all joy when you encounter various trials. Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance and let endurance have a perfect result so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

2 Corinthians 12, 10 says, Therefore, I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake.

[14:13] For when I'm weak, then I'm strong. Paul knew that there was a price to be paid for following Jesus. How many times do you, do you, do I, do we fail to act for Christ's sake to share the gospel, to voice God's truth against something that's going on in our culture because of what it might cost us, because of what people might think.

We live in a world that, as you know, is in trouble. And, you know, Isaiah says, woe to those who call evil good and good evil, and we have a whole lot of that going on in our world today.

God calls us to take a stand against that, to speak out when the opportunity arises, and it will arise. God wants us to speak about those things and make sure that we have a voice for God and says, this is wrong, the Bible says it's wrong, and this is a truth that I will stand on.

One of the female basketball players this past couple of weeks in the WNBA, I don't know if she's a believer or not, but she took a stand against men playing women's sports.

She's paid a price for that, by the way. She's also gained a lot of respect for that, and all of us as Christians ought to be respecting that kind of stand being taken, and we ought to be willing to take that stand ourselves.

[15:55] Jesus said to his disciples, the things I've spoken to you that you may have peace, in the world you'll have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.

And so, as ones who are followers of Jesus Christ, we know how the story ends, don't we? But we have a part in it while we're here, and he calls us to do that.

Paul, after he, you know, Paul had that great vision where he was taken up into the throne of God. Remember that? In 2nd Corinthians chapter 12, he's taken up in the throne of God, and he says, to keep me from exalting myself, there's the issue of pride again.

Experiences we have sometimes make us prideful, especially when we shine in those particular times. And Paul said, because of the greatness of the thing that I saw there, God gave me a thorn in the flesh.

We don't know what that is. Might have been poor eyesight because of some of the things that Paul says, but he was given a thorn in the flesh, and he said, to keep me from exalting myself. And so a sacrifice was made by Paul.

[17 : 19] And then he says this, he prayed three times to have it, listen, if the apostle Paul prays three times for something and it isn't answered, you can pretty much guess how we would be pleasing too, how we would be answered.

My grace is sufficient for you, God told him, just like he'd tell us if we were asking the same kind of thing. Lord, take this thing from me, whatever it is. Sometimes those things are miserable, if they're physical ailments or otherwise.

And it isn't always his will that we be healed. Because he can use the illness of some people, he can use us in a weakness.

In fact, Paul says this, for momentary light affliction is producing in us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comprehension.

Jesus said that if you're going to follow me, you must have a sacrificial heart.

[18 : 26] Take up your cross daily and follow me. Then, finally, Jesus said, he said, if anyone wishes to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

And follow me speaks to the fact that we need to have an obedient heart. That's how we become pleasing to God and that's how we grow in these other areas. If we're obedient to him, to follow him means to have a life of continual obedience to Christ, his words, and his ways.

Jesus asked the question one time, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and don't do what I say? Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and don't do what I say?

Paul talks about the obedience of faith in Romans chapter one, verse five. He says, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for his namesake.

Faith and obedience go hand in hand. They cannot be separated. Jesus said, you are my friends. If you do what I command you.

[19 : 43] And I studied through this for myself and I'm thinking, Dave, are you obedient as you should be?

And that's something in which we need to be growing in grace as we're believers in Jesus Christ.

He wants us to be obedient to him. Romans 12, one and two says, therefore, I urge you brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies a holy and living, holy and holy sacrifice acceptable to God which is your spiritual service of worship.

Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your minds that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

now how do we live our lives in such a way that we're subject to growth in these important areas of life?

Well, Jesus promised in John 14, 26 that he was going to send us a helper, the Holy Spirit.

[20 : 57] And Paul tells us that we should walk in the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5. He talks about that.

Turn in your Bibles there because I think it's important that we look at that a little more carefully. Galatians chapter 5. He says in verse 16, But I say walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. For these are in opposition to one another so that we may not do as we please. You know that's Paul was speaking about himself.

If you look at Romans 7, Paul says that's the kind of battle that was going on within him. That's the battle that goes on within each one of us all the time. We have choices to make every day.

And Paul says the choice is walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desires of the flesh. And he goes on to describe the needs of the flesh there. And he describes the things.

[22:03] And then he says this after talking about the fruits of the desires of the needs of the flesh. He says, but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such things there is no law. Have you ever realized when you read that passage of Scripture that that's a description of the person of Jesus Christ? And God is seeking to build into us the personality and the act and the life of Jesus Christ.

So we have the Holy Spirit to help us. But then we also have the Word of God to help us. And if you turn to 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 15 says, be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the Word of Truth, it's important that we as believers have a regular time of engagement of the Word of God in our lives, a daily time when we set aside to look to His Word, to meditate on it, and to study it.

Because there's where God's will is revealed for us in the everyday issues of life. 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16 17 says, all scriptures inspired by God, profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be adequate or perfect, complete, equipped for every good work.

I like the way Warren breaks that down. He says, teaching or doctrine is what is right, reproof is what is not right, correction is how to get right, right, and training is how to stay right.

[23:56] That's what the scripture does for us when we submit ourselves to it. What is right? Teaching, what is not right? Reproof, that's when he says, hey, you're off track here, you need to be, you need to change this.

Correction is how to get right, and training is how to stay right. God has called us to have hearts that are transformed, humble, sacrificing, and obedient, and he has given us the resources to live this way.

I mentioned that Galatians chapter 5 and verse 22 and 23 share the distinction of Christ, but I hope you noticed as we go through these that these three things, a humble heart, a sacrificing heart, an obedient heart, are things that Jesus did when he was on earth.

He had a humble heart in Luke chapter 22 verse 42 just before he's going to the cross, he's in the garden, and he's agonizing. The Bible says he sweat drops of blood because he knew the horrible thing that was going to happen on the cross.

And he said, Father, if there be any way, let this cup pass through you, but then he said this, nevertheless, not my will, but your will be done. That's a humble heart.

[25:28] 2 Corinthians chapter 8 verse 9 says, For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.

That's a sacrificial heart. John chapter 14 verse 16, Jesus said, I don't do anything of my own, I do what the Father tells me to do.

That's an obedient heart. God calls us to be people who walk in such a way that those heart, those various different types of heart are prevalent in us, are growing in us.

Psalms 78 verse 8 says this, And be not like their fathers. He's speaking to Israel here. And he says, And be not like their fathers, the stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that did not prepare its heart and whose spirit was not faithful to God.

Let's not let that be our generation. Let's be ones who submit to God in such a way as Jesus said, to come after him, to deny ourselves, to take up our cross daily, and to follow him.

[26:55] Let's bow together and pray. Father, may may