



Sermon of the Month

The Heart

TEXT: "...Is thine heart...?" 2 Kings 10:15.

Jehu, the warrior and king, was returning from battle. Seeing an acquaintance, by the wayside, Jehu stops his horse and says to his friend, Jehonadab, "Is thine heart right?" Those words were just as appropriate for that hour and place as they are for this hour and place. "Is thine heart right?" I would like to see everybody well and would like to ask all of my readers about how they fare physically (and otherwise); but I would be very busy taking care of or diagnosing the less important factors of your lives. What would all those questions be worth compared to the all important one, "Is thine heart right?"

I have known men who scarcely had a loaf of bread to eat, but who owned a government bond in heaven worth more than the whole material universe. I know men and women, (some perhaps reading these lines now), who are bedfast or confined to a rest home and who hardly get a painless breath, but whose soul is right with God and can say with Job of old, "Whereforth do I take my flesh in my teeth and put my life in mine hand? Though he slay me, yet will I trust Him." (Job 13:14-15).

The question I ask today is not about your wealth, your health or your integrity, but with the earnestness of a man who must give an account of this day's work, I cry out, oh man, oh woman immortal, "Is thine heart right?"

We need no acumen to discover that our nature is all atwist and askew. The biggest trouble we have in the world is with our souls. Men may claim that though their lives may not be just right, their heart is right.

Impossible! The orchard man never puts the worst of his apples on top of his barrel. The best part of us is our outward life. We all fell in Adam, but we have been our own Adam. We have eaten of the forbidden fruit, and have been turned out of the paradise of holiness and peace. Though the flaming sword that stood at the gate to keep us out has changed positions and comes from behind to drive us in, we will not go.

The Bible account of those in the Laodicean church is not exaggerated when it says of us today that we are poor, naked, wretched, miserable, and blind. **Poor:** The beggar who stands on our doorstep and begs for food is not so much in need of bread as we are in need for spiritual help. **Blind:** Hundreds of men and women are physically blind, but not so much in darkness as are we in darkness spiritually. **Naked:** There is not one shred of holiness left to hide our sin. **Sick and miserable:** The leprosy of sin has eaten into the heart, head, hands and feet. The marasmus of an everlasting wasting away has already seized on some of us.

It is wrong to point to something evil without pointing a way to have it remedied? If I show you the tear in your coat, it is only because the door of God's wardrobe now swings open. There is a robe, white with the fleece of the Lamb of God, and of a cut and make that an angel would not be ashamed to wear. If I snatch you from the mouldy bread that you are munching, it is only to give you the Bread of Life that is made out of the finest wheat that grows on the celestial hills and is baked in the fires of the cross. One crumb would be enough to make heaven a banquet. Go and tell to one and all that the Lord Jesus Christ can make the heart right.

First, we need a repenting heart. Sinner friend, is it not time that you turn around and start in a new direction? If we offend our friends, we are glad to apologize. God is our best friend, and it is He that we have offended. Have we done any apologizing to Him? There is nothing that we need to get rid of more than sin. It is a horrible monster. It polluted Eden. It killed Christ. It has blasted the world.

*Repent! The voice celestial cries;
Nor longer dare delay;
The wretch that scorns the mandate, dies,
And meets a fiery day.*

Yes, we need and must also have a believing heart. Some two-thousand

years ago, a weary One went up one of the hills of Asia Minor. With a cross on his back, He cried out to the whole world, offering to carry their sins and sorrows.

They cursed Him. They slapped Him in the face. They mocked Him. When He groaned, they laughed. They shook their fists at Him. They spit on Him. They hounded Him as though He were a wild beast. His healing of the sick, His sight-giving of the blind, His mercy to the outcast silenced not the revenge of the world. His prayers and benedictions were lost in that whirlwind of execration. Away with Him! Away with Him!

It was not merely the cross of wood that he carried. It was the transgressions of the human race, the anguish of the ages, the wrath of God, the sorrows of hell and the stupendous interests in an unending eternity. With His back bent, His blood started to flow from every pore. He crouched under a torture that made the sun faint and go dark even at noontide. The everlasting hills trembled. Many of those that slept in the graves came out in their winding sheets as He cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me". But the cup did not pass. None to comfort! There he hangs! What has His hand done that it should be crushed in the palm? It has been healing the lame and wiping away tears. What has that foot been doing that it should be so lacerated? It has been going about doing good. Of what has the victim been guilty? Guilty of saving the world.

Tell me ye heavens and earth, was there ever such crime? Was there ever such another criminal? On that hill of carnage, that sunless day, amid those howling rioters, your sins and mine perished. I believe it! Oh, the ransom has been paid. Those arms of Jesus were stretched out so wide that when he brought them together again, they might embrace the world.

Had I been there, I would have loved to make one wreath of flowers for Jesus. Would that all the triumphal arches of the world could be swung in one gateway where the King of Glory might come in. Would that all the harps and trumpets and organs of earthly music might, in one anthem, speak His praise. But what would earthly flowers have been to Him who walketh amid the snow of the white lilies of heaven? What would arches of earthly masonry be to Him who has about His throne a rainbow spun out of everlasting sunshine? What would have been all earthly music to Him when the hundred forty four thousand on one side, and the cherubim and seraphim and archangel stand on the other side, and all the space be filled with the doxologies of eternal jubilee? – the hosanna of a redeemed earth, the hallelujahs of unfallen angels, song after song, rising about the throne of God and the Lamb. Oh, my Lord Jesus, it would not hurt Thee for even an hour to step out from among the shining throng. They would make it all up when You would go back again.

We not only need a believing heart; we must have a forgiving heart. He will have nothing to do with us as long as we harbor an old grudge. We have all been cheated and lied about. There are people who dislike us so much that if we come down to poverty, they would say, "Good for him." They have never understood us and perhaps never will. Will we repay them with their own coin – sarcasm for sarcasm, scorn for scorn, abuse for abuse? That is not the right kind of heart. No man ever did so mean a thing to us that we have done toward God. If we cannot forgive others, how can we expect God to forgive us? Thousands have been kept out of heaven because of an un-forgiving heart.

A right heart is an expectant heart. It is a poor business to be building castles in the air. Do not spoil your comfort in a

small house because you expect a larger one. Do not fuss about your income because it is less than you expect it to be. Enjoy what you have now.

You may today be surrounded by comforts and luxuries and feel you have need of nothing. If you are not the children of God, with the signet-ring of Christ's love, let me inscribe upon your souls, "One thing thou lackest."

Whatever you miss, you must not miss heaven. It is too bright a home to lose. Your soul has been bought at too great a price – the blood of Jesus Christ that cleanseth from all sin. Casting all your sins behind you, I beg of you to start now at this Easter season for the Kingdom. Are you ready? Have you a repenting heart, a forgiving heart, an expectant heart? Is thine heart right? ■

A PSALM OF SUMMER

"Now it came to pass that spring turned to summer again, God's people raised their voices and said: 'Recreation is my shepherd, I shall not stay at home; He maketh me lie down in a sleeping bag, He leadeth me down the interstate every weekend. He restoreth my suntan; He leadeth me to state parks for comforts sake. Even though I stray on the Lord's Day, I will fear no reprimand, for Thou art with me; my rod and reel, they comfort me. I anointeth my skin with oil, my gas tank runneth dry; Surely my trailer shall follow me all the weekends this summer, and I shall return to the House of the Lord this Fall.' But then it is hunting season and that is another psalm." ■