



GOD'S GREAT HEART

DERRICK HARRISON – SESSION 4

God's Great Heart is revealed through us to other lives

1. **Monday “The Great Heart of God” reveals His inner being, His attributes and character**
2. **Tuesday “The Great Heart of God” – how does the Bible understand the meaning of the “heart?” The attributes of God demonstrated in the great heart of God**
3. **Thursday “The Great Heart of God” The heart of God reaching out to men and women: communicating His attributes.**
4. **Friday “The Great Heart of God” as it functions in the heart of the Christian.**

GOD'S GREAT HEART IS REVEALED THROUGH US TO OTHER LIVES

Session one: We have moved from a trinitarian context in session one – recognising the immanent attributes of God – “God in Himself.” This was the time recognised in the Bible as before the creation.

Session two: we looked at God's great heart in the context of the Biblical doctrine of the heart. We translate the attributes of God in the context of the human heart i.e. we looked at |God's affections, emotions, desires etc;

Session three: we viewed the attributes as they are revealed in their interaction with humanity.

We are now at a place where we can look at how God has worked from pre-creation, to then create the world and human kind – and at that point we see the attributes of God manifested in God's relationship with men and His actions on behalf of His people Israel. The third vital stage in the eternal purposes of God was the coming of God's Son into our humanity. Jesus is the ultimate manifestation of God's attributes. He mirrored the internal nature of God. God was manifested in His personality; in His humanity. It would have remained there in Christ alone, except for the purpose of God to redeem fallen humanity. The result of Jesus' great accomplishment is the regeneration of the human heart (in all its parts) and the transformation of our nature so that we can manifest God's nature and manifest the attributes of His nature. The image of God is renewed and we are now fit vessels to reveal Christ.

In session four: we will look at how the attributes of God look like in the context of the Christian life. What do the attributes look like in the heart of the Christian? We have considered how God's attributes are found in God Himself, but also move out from the heart of God to impact human lives.

The image of God is restored in regeneration; our nature begins to manifest the attributes of God. Firstly, *inwardly* - in fellowship with the triune God. This is the base upon which God moves and so it must be with us. All must come forth from Father's indwelling. Only then does the nature of God begin to manifest itself through us to the world impacting lives of men and women. We need to remind ourselves of those moral attributes again. Holiness, truth and love and these three attributes are translated into God's relationships with people. Hence, we speak of **holiness** – righteousness, justice, purity and the presence of God.

Truth as truthfulness, honesty, genuineness, integrity, humility. **Love** (1Cor.13) loving kindness, tender mercy, loving sacrifice, esteem, benevolence – putting others first.

Regeneration is the heart renewed in its seven sections; the teaching of the heart gives a welcome clarity to our understanding of “a new heart.”

First we must return to our teaching on the heart and its 7 parts – the affections, emotions, desires, conscience, mind and will and imagination. Regeneration is the heart renewed in all its parts. Human nature changed from being sinful nature to new nature, as Paul says, we are new creatures in Christ. We receive the nature of Christ who lives His life through us. We learn from our teaching about God that triune fellowship preceded creation hence it must be a key focus for our thinking. But then God moved from within Himself and created a world outside of Himself in which He is actively involved. Surely, this is a model for us! The inward indwelling of God in us – this is not an end in itself. The act of creation demonstrates the outgoing nature of God. It is the nature of God to communicate in outgoing love. And so it must be the same for us. The new nature transforms our heart but also our world. Firstly, we realize that simultaneous with our baptism in the Spirit is our baptism into the body of Christ. And our new mandate to live in the world for Christ. The new life in Christ cannot be contained in your heart; its very nature to reach out in communicating love to others.

Let's look at each section of the heart from the perspective of the child of God.

THE HEART IS THE FOCUS OF REGENERATION (JER.31:33; EZEK 36:26; ACTS 15:9).

We must be *convinced* about the importance of the heart due to the overwhelming evidence of Scripture (**Deut.6:5; Prov.4:23; Rom.Ch.1; 5:5; 10:8-10**). My Introductory Essay has demonstrated the importance of the heart in medicine, popular culture, medicine, media and most importantly in Scripture.

The advantage of this approach is that we can illustrate each attribute of the heart by illustrating each section from the lives of real people who we encounter in the Bible narratives e.g. under the last section of the orange – the will. My first reference was Gen.24:58 referring to a woman called Rebekah who shows to us very dramatically the power of the will. You will find that each section of the orange can be effectively illustrated from the life of a Bible character. In fact if you choose a key Bible character you will be able to identify many sections of the heart – take King David as such as an example. Take the book of Ruth which contains the biography of 3 key people – you will probably be able to identify each section of the heart in their stories.

THE RENEWAL OF THE HEART

- The image of God is restored – Jesus Christ lives in me
- The power of sin is broken – the power of the Spirit enables me to live a holy life
- My relationship with God is restored – I now walk in fellowship with God
- **All 7 sections of the heart are renewed**

- **The new heart**

“A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them” (Ezek.36:26-27).

- **The new heart is described by Paul,**

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2Cor.5:7).*

*“the **new man** which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Eph.4:24).*

“the workmanship of God” (Eph.2:10).

SPIRITUALITY IS THE OUTCOME OF THE RENEWED HEART:

- The heart functioning in each of its 7 parts means we are ALIVE to God and others!
- A spirituality that stresses one section of the heart above another leads to imbalance
- God made each of the sections of the heart for a purpose and each reflect His image
- God has in Himself each of these attributes - love, desire, emotion, mind, imagination, conscience and will

Spirituality is the outcome of the heart renewed and functioning in each of its parts. A spirituality that stresses one section of the heart above another section leads to imbalance. One section must not be valued higher than another. God made each of the sections of the heart for a purpose and each reflect His image. God has in Himself each of these attributes - love, desire, emotion, mind, imagination, conscience and will. Having examined each in turn you are to put them back together again! We only separate the parts of the heart to examine them! The heart functions as one whole. The heart is indivisible, it is one.

- **Jesus Christ dwells in the heart of the Christian: (Jn.17:23; Gal.4:6; Eph.3:17).**

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (Jn.17:23).

“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal.4:6).

“That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love” (Eph.3:17).

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col.1:27).

The Lord is spoken of as the ‘heart knower’ (1 Sam.16:7; 1Chron.28:9; Jer.17:10; Amos 3:2; Acts 1:24; 15:8; 1Cor.13:12; Gal.4:9). His complete knowledge of the heart points to His attribute of omniscience.

He knows my heart comprehensively (omniscience) and loves me completely (Ps.139).

- **He knows my motives and works in my heart pastorally to help me**

“But the LORD weighs the hearts.” (Prov.21:2).

“I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jer.17:10).

“My son, give me your heart” (Prov.23:26).

This is a great comfort to us. He knows my heart thoroughly (I do not) and He still loves *me!* In Proverbs we read: *“But the LORD weighs the hearts.” (21:2).* Jesus discerned the heart of man in terms of their attitude and thoughts towards Him (**Mat.9:4; Lk.7:39; 9:47; Jn.2:25**). For Paul, God is *“He who searches the heart” (Rom.8:27).*

“...only the language of the heart can ever reach another heart...” (Blaise Pascal 1623-1662)

“The heart has its reasons that reason knows not of.” (Blaise Pascal)

“The heart is the chief organ of the human body. The heart came to mean the centre of man’s mental and moral activity.” (W. E. Vine)

“The heart, then, is the centre of living, the true centre of all vital activities of body and soul and spirit.” ... “According to the Bible the heart is the centre: the centre of physical life, the centre of memory, the centre of damnation and of salvation, the centre of God’s working and the centre of the devil’s working, the centre from which everything works which moulds the human mechanism.”¹ (Oswald Chambers)

“The only conception of God that man has, is gathered from understanding of his own personality.” (G. C. Morgan)

“My son, give me your heart” (Prov.23:26).

“The first and great work of a Christian is about his heart. There it is that God dwells by his Spirit, in his saints; and there it is that sin and Satan reign, in the ungodly. The great duties

¹ *Ibid*, p99.

and the great sins are those of the heart. There is the root of good and evil: the tongue and life are but the fruits and expressions of that which dwells within.” Richard Baxter²

- 1) **Affections** - love (Jer.31:3; Hos.11:1; Jn.3:16; Rom.5:5; 8:39; 1Jn.4:8, 16)
- 2) **Desires** - (Ps.45:11; 51:6; 68:16; Lk.22:1)
- 3) **Emotions – joy:** (Neh.8:10; Isa.35:10; Mat.25:21, 23; 1Thes.1:6) ; **Emotions – sorrow:** (Gen.6:6; Isa.53:3; Mat.26:37-38; Jn.11:35; 16:6).
- 4) **Mind** – (Ps.40:5; 92:5; 139:17; Isa.14:24; 55:9; Jer.23:20; 29:11; Mic.4:12; 1Cor.2:16)
- 5) **Imagination** - *“Does God have imagination? Yes! - Gen.1:26, 27; 1Cor.11:7; 2Cor.4:4; Eph.1:4a; Col.1:15)*
- 6) **Conscience** – conscience is not used with reference to God but it is a self-evident truth regarding God, revealed in integrity, righteous actions, and right judgment. His attribute of holiness determines His actions that they will be righteous, otherwise God has no credibility. *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen.18:25; Deut.123:28; Neh.9:13; Ps.11:7)* The Holy Spirit operates in the conscience and He is God.
- 7) **The will of God** – *“Who were born, not of blood, nor of **the will** of the flesh, nor of **the will of man, but of God” (Jn.1:13)***

*“The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know **His will**, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth (Acts.22:14)*

The new birth has birthed us into God; it has brought us into God. We have been brought into the triune fellowship of God Himself. This brings us back to all that we have said in our first session. I want us to go to John ch.17. It tells us of this period before creation – we have already noted this,

“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with Your own self with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (17:5).

We also found in John several references to the attribute of love – Jesus refers several times to Father’s love for Him, v23b, v24, v26.

But the purpose of our visit to this High-Priestly Prayer of Jesus is to see the whole scheme of God’s eternal purposes. They are perfectly consistent with the scheme I have presented to you in these four sessions. (I refer you to my pamphlet which is on my website on a special page for New Life Conference and to the pamphlet entitled: *“The Indwelling God”*). This chapter looks back to eternities past before the creation of the world but **we are not there in that fellowship of the three Persons of the Godhead**. Jesus is now praying for us to be brought into that intimate fellowship and through salvation we are now in God. We can now look forwards in the future eternities of God and the glorious fact is that **we are there in that fellowship of the three Persons** of the Godhead.

I want to conclude in the present, not the future. Jesus looked back and he looked into the future in this amazing prayer. But He said – *“I have finished the work which You gave me to do. Our work is far from finished. I have shown you how God did it. It is the God ordained way for us also. Our calling is (1) to dwell in God, to fellowship with the triune God – Father Son and Holy Spirit. (2) To*

² Ritzema, E., & Vince, E. (Eds.). (2013). *300 Quotations for Preachers from the Puritans*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

manifest His nature and the attributes of His nature which impact those around us. Those attributes of God will operate not only in our devotional life but they will be manifest in the church – in our workshops we have heard about servanthood and the key attribute of humility. We have also considered the phenomenal worth of each member in the body of Christ. Remember that the church is fellowshiping in the triune God; in the heavenly places. Finally the attributes will operate in the context of mission. In God there is perfect consistency between His attributes, His attitudes and His actions. It is not only the message of the gospel we bring but also the presence of God Himself and all that He is in His nature - all of God. This fulness is manifest through you. As you engage in mission unto “the end” God promises to you His omnipresence – *“and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mat.28:20).*