

24. Jesus Taught About the Heart of Man

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children recognize those who are false teachers, like the Pharisees and scribes, whose hearts were far from God. In this topic, we will see that after Jesus left the large crowd of people He had been teaching, He explained this teaching, about the heart, to His disciples.

Mark 7:14-16 says, “When He had called all the multitude to *Himself*, He said to them, “‘Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!’” The disciples of Jesus had just been accused of breaking the traditions of the elders. Jesus had explained to the Pharisees and scribes what Isaiah said about the condition of their hearts. Here, we see that Jesus now used that opportunity to explain, to the whole crowd, that the things that defile a person are the things that are in the heart of that person.

Jesus invited the crowd to hear Him and understand. The word translated “hear” means *to consider so that there is understanding*. The word translated “understand” means *to bring things together in the mind so that there is clear understanding*. Jesus wanted the people gathered there that day to really think about what He said so there would be true understanding. Luke 24:44-45 says, “Then He said to them, ‘These *are* the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and *the* Prophets and *the* Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.” Here, we see that true understanding of the Word of God must come from the Lord.

Jesus then went on to explain that it is not what comes from outside the body that defiles the body. The Pharisees and scribes had just complained about hands that had not been washed according to the traditions of the fathers. Here, we see that Jesus made it clear that a little dust or dirt on the hands would not defile a person. Instead, it is the things that come from within a person that defile a person. Proverbs 23:6-8 talks about the way a man thinks in his heart. Those verses say, “Do not eat the bread of a miser, nor desire his delicacies; for as he thinks in his heart, so is he. ‘Eat and drink!’ he says to you, but his heart is not with you. The morsel you have eaten, you will vomit up, and waste your pleasant words.” This is a warning not to eat with the greedy person who has evil in his heart. He only offers you his food so he can increase his wealth at your expense. Such an attitude comes from the heart.

Jesus said that those who have ears to hear should hear. Later, in John 14:26, Jesus told the disciples, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” It is also the desire of Christ for all Christians to hear with understanding, so we can serve Him from our hearts. One reason Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit is to help us have that understanding. That is why 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” This verse shows us that it is the Holy Spirit who gives us understanding.

Mark 7:17-19 says, “When He had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples asked Him concerning the parable. So He said to them, ‘Are you thus without understanding also? Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, *thus* purifying all foods?’” The disciples of Jesus wanted Him to explain this parable to them after they had left the crowd. Here, we see that the disciples did have a genuine desire to understand what Jesus was teaching. This is a real example for our own lives.

Jesus began His answer with a question, “Are you thus without understanding also?” Here, we see that it was the desire of Jesus for His disciples to have full understanding. That is the same thing He desires for all true followers. We see that Jesus explained something that is very important for us to understand. In these verses, we see that Jesus made it very clear what defiles a person. Defilement does not come from the outside. Instead, defilement comes from the heart. Genesis 6:5 says, “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.” Here, we see that before the flood, it was the thoughts of the heart that defiled the people. That is exactly what Jesus wanted His disciples to understand, because the same thing has been true ever since Adam and Eve sinned. It is the heart that defiles a person.

Jesus then explained, to the disciples, that food cannot defile a person. The reason food cannot defile a person is due to the fact that food does not go to the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, “The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” The heart is our inner man. What is in the heart will control the life. Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” In this verse, we see that a mouth speaks out of the abundance of what is in the heart. Because of the sin of Adam, every person is born with a sin nature. David wrote, in Psalm 51:5, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” Here, we see that David said he had a sin nature from the time he was conceived.

Jesus then explained what the heart of a person, who has not yet repented of the sin of unbelief and come to God through Christ, is like. Mark 7:20-23 says, “And He said, ‘What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man.’” From these verses, we see that a sinful or evil heart will bear evil fruit.

In contrast, Jesus said, in John 3:6-8, “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” At the moment we repent of our sin of unbelief and receive Christ by faith, we are born of the Holy Spirit, and we are given a new nature. The desire of that new nature is to please God. Here, we see that every Christian has new desires. However, Romans 7:19-20 says, “For the good that I will *to do*, I do not do; but the evil I will not

to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not *to do*, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Here, we see that even though we now have a desire to do good, we will still do evil if we depend on our own strength.

Romans 8:26-27 says, “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit *is*, because He makes intercession for the saints according to *the will of God*.” It is as we pray and yield our heart to the Lord that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to do the things that are good and pleasing in the sight of God. With a new nature, we have a desire to do good. Each time we yield to the Holy Spirit, we will have the power to do good. This is why the first part of Luke 6:45 says, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good...” We see that a new heart gives us new desires. Then, as we yield our spirit to the Holy Spirit, we see that He gives us the power to carry out those new desires.

Jesus taught one other lesson in these verses. Jesus said that whatever enters a man from the outside enters the stomach instead of the heart. Then, it passes through the stomach and is eliminated. The word translated “purifying” means *to cleanse or to make clean*. It is the same word that is used twice in 1 John 1:7-9, where we read, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In 1 John, we see that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

A little earlier, Jesus had told the scribes and Pharisees that their tradition of washing hands was useless, because eating food with unwashed hands was not something that would defile a person. By making that statement, Jesus purified all foods. In Acts 10:12-15, the Lord taught Peter how to apply that lesson. Those verses say, “In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, ‘Rise, Peter; kill and eat.’ But Peter said, ‘Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean.’ And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, ‘What God has cleansed you must not call common.’” Peter had to learn and understand that the Gospel was for all people, not just the Jews.

In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn that Christ wants people of every kindred, tribe, and nation to be in heaven. That is why He has called us to take the Gospel to all people. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children to understand this important lesson.