

627 Do We Need a Change of Heart?

Phil Sanders

God's Answers to Life's Questions

I knew a man several years ago who had such a problem with his heart, he needed a transplant. Heart disease is a terrible thing. Sometimes the heart change we need is not physical but spiritual. Do you need a change of heart?

Today, we're asking the question, "Do we need a change of heart?" King David a thousand years before the time of Christ took some time off from the battle against the sons of Ammon. Up on the rooftop, David saw a beautiful woman bathing. He lusted after Bathsheba, called for her, and committed adultery with her. When she was found to be with child, he tried to cover up his sin by having Uriah the Hittite come home to her. When his plans failed, David had Uriah killed in the heat of battle. So the sweet psalmist of Israel who was so faithful in his youth, found himself a moral failure later in life. He needed a change of heart.

The Bible says in 2 Samuel 12:1-7, "Then the LORD sent Nathan to David. And he came to him and said, 'There were two men in one city, the one rich and the other poor. The rich man had a great many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb which he bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and his children. It would eat of his bread and drink of his cup and lie in his bosom, and was like a daughter to him. Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man's ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.' Then David's anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, 'As the LORD lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die. He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.' Nathan then said to David, 'You are the man!'"

Those words, "you are the man," must have burned in David's heart. He knew that he had wronged Uriah and committed adultery with Bathsheba. Like so many of us when we sin, he pushed his sin into the back of his mind and was unwilling to deal with it. Perhaps in his mind he thought he had so covered it up that no one would find out; but God knew and David knew. In Psalm 32:3-4, David speaks about how guilt weighed upon him: "When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer." Sin will do that; it will weigh down the heart till there is nothing left but regret and headache. Many people think they can sin in private and cheat the consequences, but they are only fooling themselves. Sin always has a higher price to pay than they think.

David spoke of his experience with this sin in Psalm 51:1-4. In this psalm of penitence, David sang, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the greatness of Your compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are justified when You speak and blameless when You judge." David needed cleansing on the inside. He needed to be transformed into a new person, because he despised what he had done. When David finally faced up to his sin, he wanted a different heart, a new opportunity to do right. As the Psalm continues, David sang, "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (verses 7-10).

Because our God is gracious and forgiving, David found forgiveness. Forgiveness is such a blessing. It releases a person from

all the hurt, the guilt, and the spiritual consequences of sin. David said in Psalm 32:1-2, "How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!" Forgiveness means there are no secrets; the sin has come out in the open between God and us. God knows about the sin, but out of love He no longer holds that sin against us. This frees us to enter into a loving and wonderful relationship with God, to change our lives, to start over. Our God is the God of grace and opportunity. He opens the door for transformation in our lives. We change our thinking, our values, and our behavior. When the grace of God takes hold of a person, he becomes a new and different person altogether. Several things happen in your heart when you are born again.

First, you will mourn the sin in your past. David said in Psalm 51:1-4, "Be gracious to me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness; According to the greatness of Thy compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, And cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, And my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned, And done what is evil in Thy sight, So that Thou art justified when Thou dost speak, And blameless when Thou dost judge." It is an important day in a person's life when he takes responsibility for his actions. It is important because he finally sees what he has done; and if what he has done is evil, he will wish that he had never sinned against God. In some cases, we can never see the harm we have done until it is too late. We say things we wish we could take back. We do things we wish we had never done.

The apostle Paul mourned his sin in Romans 7:14-20, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin. For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me." He had a struggle going on inside of his heart. At length, he cried out, "Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?" (verse 24) He answers, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" The Lord Jesus, through His blood and His grace, can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. He can indeed deliver us from sin and from death. Jesus said in Matt. 5:4, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." We all ought to mourn the sin in our lives. David said in Psalm 51:6, "Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being. And in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom." It is not always easy to be honest with ourselves; easier to deny a sin, ignore it, or hide it. None of this will make sin go away. David found that out. He mourned what he did. When we sin, just what does God want? David said in Psalm 51:16-17, "For Thou dost not delight in sacrifice, otherwise I would give it; Thou art not pleased with burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Second, you will despise sin. It is out of gratitude for that gift of grace that we see the real need to change our lives and our thinking about the terrible things sin does in our lives and to the lives of people we love. Christians hate sin. They don't hate sinners; they hate sin. They hate it because they see the ugliness of it and how it hurts. Sin hurts the one who sins; it hurts others; and it is always an offense to God. When you love God, you want to love the things that

God loves and hate the things that God hates. Paul said in Rom. 12:9, "Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good." Repentance doesn't just despise the penalty for sin—being lost and condemned—it hates the sin itself. It hates the fact that anything could hurt God like that. Sin separates us from God and causes people to be lost. Those who love God will hate the fact that sin might cause someone to miss heaven and lose their soul.

David said in Psalm 119:104, "From Thy precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way." The more we read God's word, the more we see the sense in doing what is right and despising what is wrong. Solomon said in Prov. 8:13, "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way, And the perverted mouth, I hate." Solomon knew what sin does and how it hurts. This is why John said in 1 John 2:15-17, "Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever." When we hate sin, we can't go back to that again, do that again, give in to that temptation. We know the harm and hurt and ruin of our sins. We hate that behavior. Someone has said, "It is much easier to repent of sins that we have already committed than to repent of those we intend to commit." When we love God, we learn to hate sin.

Third, you will hunger for righteousness. David prayed in Psalm 51:7-9, "Purify me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, Let the bones which Thou hast broken rejoice. Hide Thy face from my sins, And blot out all my iniquities." David wanted to be clean—felt filthy and wanted to be clean again. Jesus said in Matt. 5:6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." We need to long for righteousness the way those who are truly hungry long for food and those who are really thirsty long for water. We should want righteousness the way a person longs for life itself. David said in Psalm 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me." David wanted a new start, a rebirth, to be a new creature. Few things in life are better than an opportunity to start over."

Paul reminds us in 2 Cor. 5:17, "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. David said in Psalm 51:11-12 "Do not cast me away from Thy presence, and do not take Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and sustain me with a willing spirit." There is a wonderful joy that comes from knowing I am right with my God. Someone said, "When the soul has laid down its faults at the feet of God, it feels as though it had wings." Joy comes from

knowing God is with me, for me. I have His presence in my life. I want and need God in my life—when I have Him, I am so thankful. Paul's encouragement, "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, rejoice!" is a blessing that arises out of being right with God. Do you rejoice in your faith?

Fourth, you will tell others of God's goodness. David said in Psalm 51:12-15, "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, And sustain me with a willing spirit. Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, And sinners will be converted to Thee. Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation; Then my tongue will joyfully sing of Thy righteousness. O Lord, open my lips, That my mouth may declare Thy praise." When good things happen, you can hardly keep from telling people all around about it. Just talk to any grandparent! In Mark 7:36, when Jesus healed the deaf mute in Decapolis, he "gave them orders not to tell anyone; but the more He ordered them, the more widely they continued to proclaim it." Joy and love and thanksgiving will create in your heart an excitement that cannot be contained! You will want everyone to know this Jesus who has loved you. You'll want everyone to know about your salvation. The question is, are you right with God? Do you need a change of heart where you mourn over sin, despise it, long for righteousness, and are willing to tell others about your love and faith in Jesus Christ? I hope you are right with the living God and that you have obeyed the gospel. There is nothing more important that you can do.

Ezekiel the prophet warned Israel in Ezek. 18:31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel?" There is a real need in our day for repentance. Repenting of our sins is not optional. If we wish to live with God, we will change our hearts and live for the Lord, Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." Many people want the grace of God, but they forget the need for repentance. The grace of God always works through repentance and a change of heart. Are there sins you need to cast away from yourself? Do you need a new heart, a new attitude, a new life? Why will you die, O friend? Why not come to the Lord in faith and repentance with love. Confess the name of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God; and be baptized into His death, so that your sins will be forgiven. When you are baptized in water in the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord forgives you and adds you to His church. When you are born of water and the Spirit, you undergo the new birth and become a new creature. All the past is gone and you are alive to God. I hope that you will do that today. Don't wait, because today is the only day you possess. Let the love of Christ move you to be obedient to His will.

*Copyright 2005, Phil Sanders
Concord Road Church of Christ
8221 Concord Rd., Brentwood, TN 37027
1-877-226-5747*

phil@God-answers.org

www.tv.God-answers.org