

FORMING A HEART THAT INVITES GOD'S TOUCH - Putting Warmth Back Into Your Soul - Part two

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Isaiah 66:1-5 - "Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? [2] All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word. [3] "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations; [4] I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight." [5] Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame."

We're continuing with this great text in the first five verses of Isaiah chapter 66. Especially **verse 2** - "...But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word."

We should listen very closely to those words. A state of heart that God values more than any **temple**, more than the **stars or planets** He created.

"When I see this kind of heart in a person, you can be sure that I'm thrilled. My blessing and attention will always be focussed on him - ***I set my attention on a person like that!***"

In the last message in this series we looked at **the traits** of a trembling heart. There are still some outlines from that message available. Tonight I want to come at the same subject from a different angle. What I want to show is that a trembling heart is not just a moved heart or a disturbed heart or a convicted heart. This can be seen from a number of passages:

- a) **Acts 24:24-25** - "After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, and he sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. [25] And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, "Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you."

Several things should be pointed out about Felix:

- i) ***He knew the content of what Paul was talking about - 24:22 - "But Felix, having a rather accurate knowledge of the Way, put them off, saying, 'When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.'"***

Felix knew that Paul wasn't just some foggy-minded dreamer. He had seen evidence of the working of God among the church. He knew the basic doctrines. He wasn't void of understanding of Christian truth.

- ii) ***He sensed that Paul was telling him the truth about his own sin and sensed his own guilt inwardly - 24:25 - "And as he reasoned about righteousness and self-control and the coming judgment, Felix was alarmed and said, 'Go away for the present. When I get an opportunity I will summon you.'"***

In other words, Felix not only knew what Paul was talking about but ***was moved as the truth gripped his heart***. This is absolutely amazing. The KJV says he ***"trembled"*** as he heard Paul speak. He was moved and stirred in his heart as the Word of God reached his soul. One would think this kind of emotional attachment to the truth of the gospel equated with having a ***trembling heart***.

Let's look at another New Testament text to consider what *isn't* proof of a proper trembling of heart:

b) **James 2:19 - "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"**

We looked at this briefly this morning in our teaching through the book of James. It makes an interesting study to look at the *faith of demons*:

- i) ***They believe in the one true God*** - Demons don't worship *idols*. They lead people to worship idols, but they know better. The only God they believe in is the ***one true God of the Bible***.
- ii) ***They believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*** - **Matthew 8:29** - "And behold, they cried out, 'What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?'" They see the absolute power of Jesus over all the forces of hell. They know they're *vulnerable* before His might. They know who Jesus is.
- iii) ***They believe fully in the Biblical doctrine of the judgement*** - **Matthew 8:29** - "And behold, they cried out, 'What have you to do with us, O Son of God? Have you come here to torment us before the time?'"

These are striking words. Apparently even a sure knowledge of an ***appointed time of judgment*** isn't enough to create a love for God. These beings don't *doubt* their coming doom. They just want to know if ***this*** is their time. They know that a day of judgement is coming for themselves and all who forsake God.

Demons don't seem to be able to blank out any thought of future judgment and accountability the way many people do. The Bible says part of Satan's agony is he can't escape the idea that his ***"time is short."***

- iv) ***They believe all of these things so fully they are visibly moved and emotionally shaken by the force of these truths*** - **James 2:19** - "You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe - ***and shudder!***"

The demons believe Jesus died for sinners. They know the power of the Kingdom of God. They tremble before it. Yet, in spite of all this, ***this is not the trembling heart that God says he "looks on" in Isaiah 66:2***. What's the difference?

This leads into the central teaching point of tonight's teaching. The true trembling heart trembles not just out of fear of God's wrath and judgement. A trembling heart pleasing to God fears anything ***destroying communion*** with this God. It fears ***distance*** between itself and the God it loves.

Here's how I would illustrate the ***opposite*** of a loving trembling heart. I can still vividly remember one day back in dad's pastoring days in Prince George, B.C. In ways the four Horban boys must have missed, it had been a particularly bad day for my mother in terms of her assessment of the godliness of her boys. Apparently we had broken the windshield of the RCMP officer's car next door with a sling-shot. We tried to hide two baby ducks in the church bathroom. And there was a small incident when we accidentally burned down an abandon shed in the field across the road.

For whatever reason, my mother seemed stressed out and much at prayer. My father, obviously overestimating our maturity or our righteousness or both, marched us all downstairs to apologize to mom who had been weeping at our wickedness. Dad thought that breaking mom's heart would be worse punishment than anything he could do to us. We were glad to be off the hook having miraculously missed a beating.

Our indifference to our mother's **broken** heart showed the **smallness** and **selfishness** of ours. Had we had **trembling** hearts in the Isaiah sense we would have chosen **any** punishment rather than break the heart of the mother we loved.

And this is the level on which many Christians live years of their walk with Jesus. It is somehow possible to go to church, embrace the doctrines of the New Testament, and yet **not** live the bulk of life actually **motivated by love for the Lord**. The heart that "**fears the Lord**" in the scriptural sense **fears losing him more than it fears anything else!**

Let's apply this. Here's a man who feels hopelessly addicted to internet pornography. He tells himself he can't possibly quit. Then he hears the footsteps of his wife coming up the stairs to his office. And he shuts that site off instantly.

What happened? What was it in the sound of her steps that gave him the sudden will-power to shut it down? There was a more powerful force introduced than his lonely sex. He feared losing his wife's respect. He feared breaking her heart.

Think this through, church. Here's the reason for so many **surface changes** and **temporary conversions** in the church today. The foundation never gets laid right at the beginning. **People get temporarily and lightly moved by God for all sorts of reasons:**

- i) There can arise a temporary fear of the Lord because a loved one is sick and near death. The **fear of losing them drives us to God**.
- ii) There can arise a temporary fear of the Lord because my teenager is going wild. **"I guess I'd better get serious about the Lord myself so they have something to follow by way of example."** But my fear is a **fear for my child**, not a true fear of the Lord.
- iii) There can arise a fear of some major **financial ruin or set back**. Suddenly the economy starts to sour. My empire looks less secure than I had previously imagined. **"I'd better get things in order here before it's too late and start tithing!"** And tithing is good and right - as long as it's **rooted in a fear of the Lord, rather than just a fear for my future**.

The pure fear of the Lord - the trembling heart - may have many desires. But the chief and dominating desire is that God be glorified and pleased with everything I do - that nothing ever comes between my deepest joy and His deepest joy.

That's why the fear of the Lord is called the **"beginning of wisdom."** It is the only Biblical starting place for a sound life. It drives everything else about your walk with Jesus. If that holy fear of the Lord is at the core of my mind **all the other choices of my heart will be wise ones**. They will be **prompted and motivated by Him alone**. This kind of heart will set all the desires of my heart in **order**. My heart will become **united** in the true Biblical sense - **"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy Name."**

Just listen to the plain, bare Word of God on this subject. It really is holy ground:

Psalm 19:9 - "the fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever...."

Psalm 111:10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all those who practice it have a good understanding...."

Proverbs 9:10 - "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is

insight.”

Proverbs 15:33 - "The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor."

Notice the Bible establishes the fear of the Lord as the **foundation** for any other instruction on godliness. This is the all important starting point. Everything else - even **good** pursuits - will crumble under the pollution of selfish motives without a trembling heart before the Lord.

If I don't fear the Lord **more** than I fear anything else I will move along in my Christian life fairly well - but only up to a point. Then God will talk to me about a cherished area of self-rule or call me to make a specific sacrifice that seems out of proportion to the way other Christians around me are fulfilling their call before the Lord.

Immediately the deepest motive of my heart will be exposed. The **"fear of the Lord"** is what keeps me making **spiritually pure decisions**. Decisions are always measured by my **deepest motive** in making them. Everything I do is measured by the degree to which I long to bring joy to God's heart while I do it. This alone keeps my fallen and deceptive heart from becoming disillusioned and discouraged in following my Lord.

Psalms 130:1-4 - "Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! [2] O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! [3] If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? [4] But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared."

Notice the unusual mixture in that fourth verse. **"You're forgiving, therefore I fear you!"** But it's not really all that unusual. Think back to the way James reminded us of the way **demons** tremble and shudder before God. They don't **love** Him. They just fear His **punishment**.

David won't live on that level. He won't allow his heart to even consider that as long as God isn't keeping track of sin he can do as he pleases. At least as long as nobody else finds out.

To understand David's heart you have to understand what he fears most isn't punishment. It's breaking fellowship with the God he loves. Because he loves this forgiving God so much he will take every step - no matter how costly or painful - to stay in the sunshine of His love!