

REVIEW: This is the fourth study in a short series on the subject, LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST. The purpose of this series is to challenge us to go beyond our present level of living and accept the challenge of the Lord to greater development in our relationship to Him. The first study was LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST BELIEVING. The second study was LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST FOLLOWING JESUS and the third was LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING. This study is directed to the most basic element of Godly living – the heart. LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST LOVING THE LORD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS is another universal command from Christ for all believers at all times and in every area of life. Total love for the Lord is the whole of Christian living!

LIVING ON THE EDGE OF ALMOST LOVING THE LORD WITH ALL OUR HEARTS

THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL AND WITH ALL THY MIND, Matthew 22:37

I. DEFINITIONS: There is a complexity in defining the various ingredients of the human life. At times terms overlap and are used interchangeably in our conversations and writing. At times we use physical terms to refer to more abstract psychological and spiritual areas of human behavior. Such is the case with the text under consideration.

A. Love: Love (phileo) represents the tender affections and passion of an individual while (agape) describes an attitude of God toward man. This love is only available from God who must place it in the human life. It is a self-sacrificing love without thought of personal benefit, Galatians 5:22. It is impossible to love the Lord, as the text requests, or to demonstrate a proper Christian life without first receiving God's love by receiving Him.

B. Heart: The heart is used to signify the seat of the moral, emotional, reasoning and will aspects of a person. It includes both the rational and emotional elements of people. It speaks of the true character of a person as demonstrated in the sinfulness, grief, joy, desires, affections, thoughts, precepts, imagination, conscience, purpose, will, faith, etc. The range of the heart of man can be from unbelievable evil or graciously giving.

C. Soul: Soul is used in scripture to refer to the immaterial seat of a person. It speaks of the element of man that perceives, reflects, feels, desires,

and purposes. It is also the seat of the new life that comes when one trusts Christ as Savior, is born again and receives a spiritual life, John 3:6.

D. Mind: The mind speaks generally of the reflective consciousness, perception, understanding, feelings, judgment and determination of an individual. Scripturally, it is used as one's way of thinking more than the actual action of thinking. The unregenerate mind speaks of natural moral reflections and impulses without the Holy Spirit's control. The believer is asked by God to demonstrate a new Christ-like mind and never to permit the natural mind to get control in any area of life. The natural mind and the Spiritual mind will always be in contradiction to each other. The way life goes for an individual is very much in relationship to the condition of one's heart.

Proverbs 23:7 "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

This study will only include the area of the heart and the challenge to love the Lord God with all our hearts.

II. HEART CONDITION:

A. Evil Heart: The depravity of humanity is described as having an evil, wicked heart. This does not mean that in an unregenerate state one is incapable of doing anything philanthropically good; however, it does mean that there is no limit to the evil a person can think and do. It also means that even a good deed cannot establish a righteousness equal to God's demand.

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it."

B. Hardened Heart: God's people can rebel against God's right to govern them in specific situations. Israel suffered for forty years because of one generation's refusal to obey God. It is often unfortunate, but one generation often does enslave the next. In fact, several generations often suffer and pay for those before them. Living below a generation's social mores is historically certifiable and the price for doing so is verifiable.

Hebrews 3:15 "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation." (Israel's rebellion against God's word through Moses)
Mark 7:6 "The people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

C. Slow Heart: Jesus spoke of the people of His day of being "slow of heart" to believe in revelational information given by the Holy Spirit of God to the prophets of Israel. Rationalization is most often believed over revelation. In fact, our present educational system rejects all revelation from God—even when observation and documentation are currently possible! One illustration is eschatological revelation of present world situations.

Luke 24:25, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken."

III. HEART TROUBLE:

A. Talk: Jesus clearly identified that the condition of a person's heart may be known by the language that comes from their mouth. Evil conversation indicates an evil person, even if they momentarily speak "good things"! Contrariwise, a person of good character will normally speak "good things" by their nature and by habit. He also warned that every evil and hurtful word will be accountable to Him in eternity. Bitter words are better not said.

Matthew 12:34, "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things."

Matthew 15:19, "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts."

B. Treasurer: There is a direct correlation between the values and desires of a person's life and the behavior and conduct that will certainly be demonstrated. The maxim, "Thy treasure, thy heart", is a truism easily observable, but most often disregarded. The Christian is asked to seek and set their affections on above where Christ is and not on things on earth, Colossian 3:1, 2. Check out most of the popular preaching today and see if you think the message is about a believer's relationship to heavenly standards or earthly satisfactions!

Matthew 6:21, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also."

C. Troubled: By becoming man, Jesus understood the human condition. He understood both the goodness that could come from the human heart, but also knew its redemptive limitations. He knew the depravity of the human heart and the unlimited suffering it could cause. He knew the despair that one could go through when hope is alive and then removed. To those who had hope in His messiahship and lost that hope when they understood He would soon be crucified, He said, "Let not your heart be troubled." The assurance He gave the early believers was that He would come again. In the meantime, He would prepare an eternal place for them. The complexity of human disappointment, sufferings, and even death need not be troubling when it is realized that God offers the believer something much better than this temporary earthly habit. He offers heaven that is greater than the mind can conceive, greater than the heart can desire and much greater than anything we can see, hear or even imagine in the heart, I Corinthians 2:9.

John 14:1, "Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me."

IV. HEART REPLACEMENT:

A. A New Heart: If, because of sin, the heart of man can be proved to be capable of becoming indescribably evil, it follows that to regain our Godlikeness

we need a new heart. The Psalmist clearly understood this need for regeneration when he wrote,

Psalms 51:10, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

B. A Burning Heart: The discouraged believers who met the Lord on the Emmaus Road following His resurrection, received a new heart when they hear Jesus teach.

Luke 24:32, "Did not our hearts burn within us while He talked to us."

C. A Loving Heart: The single ultimate condition God wants in His believers is to unreservedly love God. No desire should be greater than our desire to honor the Lord our God with our hearts, minds and souls.

Matthew 22:37, "Thou shall love the Lord thy God with all thy hearts and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."

D. A Kept Heart: Every believer is expected by God to protect their hearts. This is to be done by being careful of what we receive into our persons through ear, eyes, healthy influences, our speech, where we go, and removing ourselves from evil situations, Proverbs 4:20-23,

Psalms 119:11, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

E. A Believing Heart: The heart (emotional response to the gospel), is part of receiving Christ as Savior. In fact, repenting and believing, is the sole human condition for salvation.

Romans 10:10, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

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