

THE HUMAN HEART—“FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE”

At this time of year we are made especially conscious of the heart, especially as it is used as a symbol of love at Valentine’s Day. We find hearts adorning greeting cards and chocolates in heart-shaped boxes. Of course as we so refer to hearts, we realize that the term is being used regarding the seat of our desires, our wills and our emotions rather than the physical blood pump.

The physical heart, as God designed it, is a fantastic mechanism. Nothing formed by human hands can equal it. Beating at an average rate of 75 beats per minute, it faithfully pumps blood throughout the body, providing life-giving nutrients and energy to every cell. That means that during a year’s time it will beat about 40 million times, and in a lifetime of 70 years two and a half billion times. It is so designed as to pump about 4 ounces of blood in an adult at each beat, and in the course of a day, 3000 gallons, and in a year 650 thousand gallons—sufficient to fill 81 tank cars, each of which will hold 6000 gallons. In one hour’s time it does sufficient work to lift a 150 pound man to the height of a three-story building, or, in 12 hours to lift a 65-ton tank car one foot off the ground, and in a span of 20 years to raise the largest battleship afloat out of the water. If we reflect on this, can we say it any better than David said it: “I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works: and that my soul knoweth right well” (Psa. 139:14)?

As the word “heart” is used in Scripture, however, it refers to the center of our consciousness. *Eerdman’s Dictionary of the Bible* states, “The Hebrews thought of the whole human being and personality with all its physical, intellectual and psychological attributes when they used ‘heart.’ It was considered the governing *center* of all of these. It is the heart (the core) that makes and identifies the purpose (Prov. 4:23). Character, personality, will and mind are modern terms which all reflect something of the meaning of ‘heart’ in its biblical message.” In creation, man’s heart was pure before it was defiled by sin. With the fall of man, however, the heart is spoken of as being “evil” (Gen. 6:5), “hardened” (Ex. 7:13), lustful (Ps. 81:12), “stony” (Ezek. 26:26), “revolting and rebellious” (Jer. 5:23), “deceitful and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), etc.

God’s desire for those who would honor and fear Him, however, is a change of heart through Jesus Christ. God’s promise to the house of Israel was, “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 a 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 Testament clarifies the source of this new heart—Jesus Christ. Jesus spoke of it as being “born again...of water and of the Spirit” (John 3:3-5). Regarding the conversion of Cornelius and his family (Acts 10-11), Peter said

of them that God “put no difference between them (Gentiles) and us (Jews), purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). Their faith was in the one of whom Peter had spoken—Jesus Christ., Theirs was an obedient faith, evidenced in their yielding to Peter’s having “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Such is the power of the gospel—the good news of salvation available to us by the grace of God. The human heart is a defiled heart—defiled by sin. But in repentance and baptism faith opens its arms to receive a new heart, purified by the blood of Jesus Christ, so we can again say with David, “I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made!”

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