

"GUARD YOUR HEART" SERIES

#5: "God Gives Us a Pure Heart"

INTRO:

Thus far in this series I have talked about:

1. The need to guard your heart;
2. The fact that God and only God knows your heart;
3. The deceitfulness of your heart; and
4. How your heart must be presented to God, contrite and broken.

This morning I want to talk about how God can give us a "new" or "purified" heart.

In Psalm 51:10 the sinful David calls upon God to ***"Create in me a clean heart...and renew a right spirit within me."***

Through the prophet Ezekiel, in chapter 36, verses 26 and 27, God promised the people that the time would come when He would ***"give (them) a new heart and put a new spirit (in them)."*** He said, ***"...I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules."***

Well, that time came when Jesus came to live a sinless life among them and die on the cross for them. Jesus said, ***"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly"*** (John 10:10).

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:17, ***"...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come."***

In Acts 15:5-11, where some of the converts to Christianity from among the Pharisees were contending that Gentile converts ***"must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses,"*** Peter said, ***"God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and He made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith."*** In other words, God gave them "new" or "purified" hearts.

In 1 Corinthians 2:16 Paul quotes Isaiah 40:13, "**for who has understood the mind (or heart) of the Lord that he may instruct him?**" and then says, "**but we have the mind (or heart) of Christ.**"

Some things are very clear:

1. God created us with pure, eternal hearts;
2. Sin, or disobedience, on the part of Adam and Eve destroyed the purity and eternality of the human heart;
3. We cannot, with all our human effort and will-power, restore the purity and eternality our hearts;
4. Only God can create in us a pure heart, a right spirit, and an eternal life.

But why? How? And how do we know He has? I'd like to try to answer these questions today.

First,

WHY DOES GOD WANT TO GIVE US A NEW, PURE HEART?

God must have some powerful reasons, because He's gone to great lengths to make it possible for us to have new, pure hearts.

He unveiled a plan for doing it right after Adam and Eve disobeyed Him and lost their purity and all the blessings that went with it, such as immortality and total contentment.

In Genesis 3:14-15, right after they had succumbed to Satan's temptation, God said to Satan:

"Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

"**Enmity**" is "hatred." It is the exact opposite of "love." Satan became the hated enemy of mankind from that time onward. The woman's "**offspring**" here is a veiled reference to Christ, who would eventually be born, and, though He would be bruised (on the cross), He would bruise Satan's head, a death blow.

Mankind's bent to rebellion and sin, however, threatened to prevent God's plan from continuing to unfold, so He saved the only righteous man on earth and his family (Noah, his wife, his three sons, and their wives) and destroyed the rest with a world-wide flood.

Through Abraham, to whom He made the promise to bless all the nations of the world, God instituted "The Patriarchal Dispensation," or "Abrahamic Covenant," which continued until a system of law could be inaugurated.

Through Moses, a system of laws – ceremonial, moral, civil, dietary, etc. – were given for the people to live by. Sin was defined as a violation of any of these laws. This was the Mosaical Dispensation, or Mosaical Covenant

After many centuries, in which God's patience was tried beyond measure, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, was born. He lived a sinless life but was executed on a Roman cross among common criminals. He was buried in a borrowed tomb only to rise from the dead on the third day. After appearing to hundreds over a period of forty days, and after giving final instructions to his disciples, He ascended back to the Father in heaven as the eleven apostles looked on.

After that, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit arrived, and with the apostle Peter leading the way, "The New Covenant," or "Christian Dispensation," or "Church Age," was inaugurated through which people could be spiritually reborn or receive a "new, pure heart."

The gospel of Christ was preached, the keys to the kingdom were revealed (repent and be baptized), and the church was launched with 3,000 born-again believers! That "New Covenant" continues in force today.

All this has happened so that the whole world – those who lived before the coming of the Messiah and those who have lived after His coming – might be forgiven of the sins of their hearts and saved for eternity in heaven! The cleansing blood of Christ "flowed backward" to Abraham, Moses, David, and all those who died in faith under previous covenants. It "flows forward" to us and to all who will accept God's gift of His Son. As Peter wrote, "(God) **is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance**" (2 Peter 3:9).

The sin of our impure hearts keeps us from fellowship with God, so He makes it possible for our hearts to be purified so He can receive us back into His family, into fellowship with Him.

Second,

HOW DOES HE DO IT? HOW DO WE GET THIS NEW, PURE HEART?

Well, it's not something we can do on our own. In a nutshell, it's a matter of giving our sinful, broken, contrite hearts to God and letting His Spirit remake them.

Peter said concerning the Gentiles that were becoming Christians: "**He (God) *made no distinction between us (Jews) and them, for he cleansed their hearts by faith.***" They had responded to the preaching of the gospel with faith. In other words, they believed in God and in Jesus as His Son – that He was the promised Messiah. As Hebrews 11:6 says, "**...*anyone who comes to him (God) must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.***"

When we seek God, we must not only believe in Him and in Jesus as His Son, but we must do it with a broken and contrite heart, as David says in Psalm 51. In other words, we must be repentant. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "**...*unless you repent, you too will all perish.***" In Acts 17:30 Paul told the Greeks in Athens: "**...(God) *commands all people everywhere to repent.***"

But what is "repentance"? In 2 Corinthians 7:10 Paul wrote: "**Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation.**" So, it is "**godly sorrow**" that brings "**repentance.**" So, what is repentance? The word Paul wrote in the original Greek was METANOEO, which means "to change one's mind or purpose for the better." In Acts 26:20 Paul speaks of repenting and turning to God and proving it by one's deeds. So, repentance involves turning away from sinful living and turning to godly living.

When Peter preached the gospel on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2, "**they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the other apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?' And Peter said to them, 'Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'**"

So, after repentance comes baptism **"in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins."** Baptism has its roots in Judaism. Our English word "baptism" comes from the Greek BAPTISMA, which means "the process of immersion, submersion and emergence." Interestingly, by the time an English version of the Bible was produced, the Roman Church (in 1311) had replaced the biblical BAPTISMA or "immersion" with RANTIZO or "sprinkling," and so the translators, not wanting to "rock the boat," so to speak, *transliterated* (or English-ized) the Greek BAPTISMA and its other forms and came up with new English words: baptism, baptize, baptistry, etc., so as to "hide" the original idea of "immersion" and not countermand what the Church had done. Rest assured, however, that when the Bible speaks of "baptism," it is referring to immersion in water and emerging from water. Not one Bible scholar disputes that.

Note two other things from the Acts 2 passage: baptism, which comes after repentance, is associated with **"the forgiveness of sins,"** and it is followed by **"the gift of the Holy Spirit."**

When a believer in God and in Jesus as the Son of God repents and is baptized (immersed in water), his sins are forgiven. When the believer's sins are forgiven, the Holy Spirit moves into his heart to begin sanctifying or purifying it, a process that takes a lifetime.

However, in spite of all this, we become acceptable to God *only* because the righteous of Christ is *imputed* to us. That means that Christ's purity is credited to us. Paul wrote in Romans 4:5 and 24 that **"...the man who...trusts God...his faith is credited as righteousness. . . God will credit righteousness for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead."**

Have you presented your broken and contrite heart to the Lord?
Third,

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT WE'VE GOT A NEW, PURIFIED HEART?

Here's where the 1st letter of John becomes so relevant...

In chapter 5, verse 13, John wrote: **"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life."**

In chapter 2, verse 3, he wrote: **"...we know that we have come to know him** (Christ, God) **if we keep his commandments."** The phrase **"know him"** means "saved" or "have a new, purified heart." The evidence, according to John is our obedience.

Have you obeyed the Lord in faith? Have you believed in God and in Jesus as the Son of God? Have you obeyed in repentance? Have you obeyed in baptism? Are you living a life of obedience to the Lord? John goes on in chapter 2, verses 5-6: **"By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which** (Jesus) **walked."**

Then, in chapter 3, verse 6, he wrote: **"No one who abides in** (Christ) **keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him or known him."**

John's referring to *willful* sin here, not the sin that we are dragged into by our sinful flesh (See James 1) that we confess to the Lord as in chapter 1, verse 9.

Then, in chapter 4, verse 13, he wrote: **"...we know that we abide in** (Christ) **and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."**

Do you have the Spirit? If you have truly repented of your sins and been baptized, you have God's word on it.

Paul says that those who have the Spirit will have **"the fruit of the Spirit,"** which is **"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"** (Galatians 5:22).

CONCLUSION:

Now, I know that this is a lot to digest, especially if you're hearing all this explained for the first time. If this is pretty new to you, I suggest that you take home a hard copy of this message and study the Scriptures. Luke says in Acts 17:11 that **"the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true."**

May God bless you as you seek to be obedient to Him...