God's Heart Work

(The Divine Heart Surgeon)

The Book of Ezra & Selected Scriptures

5/23/2010

Introduction: The essence of personality: The Heart

The nature of man's Heart: Desperately Wicked

How does God work in the hearts of men & women?

I. He <u>PREPARES</u> Hearts
(to motivate His tools (servants) – as the <u>Kings of Persia</u>: Cyrus, Artaxerxes, & Darius – Ezra 1-7)

II. He <u>TURNS</u> Hearts
(to to accomplish His will – as the King of Assyria - Ezra 6:22)

III. He <u>DIRECTS</u> Hearts
(to fulfill His desires – as <u>Nehemiah</u> – Neh.2:12)

IV. He <u>HARDENS</u> Hearts
(to manifest His glory – as <u>Pharaoh</u> - Exodus 9:12, 10:1, 11:10*)*

V. He <u>INSPIRES</u> Hearts
(to motivate His servants – as <u>Bezaleel</u> – Exodus 36:1-2)

VI. He <u>CHANGES</u> Hearts
(to return to His ways – as <u>David</u> – Psalm 51:10)

VII. He <u>INSTRUCTS</u> Hearts
(to instill His wisdom – as <u>Solomon</u> – 1 Kings 10:24)

VIII. He <u>OPENS</u> Hearts
(to receive His Truth – as <u>Lydia</u> - Acts 16:14)

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Introduction:

The essence of personality: The Heart

"Heart" = kardia (Eng. cardiac, etc.) - "the chief organ of physical life ("for the life of the flesh is in the blood - Lev. 17:11), occupies the most important place in the human system. By an easy transition, the word came to stand for man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. In other words, the heart is used figuratively for the hidden springs of the personal life." (Vine, p. 206-207).

"The heart is the center of the inner life of the person where all the spiritual forces and functions have their origin" (TDNT)

Our heart (kardia) is that inner aspect of man that **thinks** (Lk. 9:47), **reasons** (Mk. 2:6, 8), **ponders** (Lk. 2:19), **imagines** (Lk. 1:51), **remembers** (Lk. 1:66), **purposes** (II Cor. 9:7), **wonders** (Lk. 3:15), **determines** (Lk. 21:14), **questions** (Lk. 24:38), **believes** (Lk. 24:25; Acts 8:37; Ro. 10:9, 10), and **motivates** (Mk. 7:21).

The heart encompasses man's intellect (Mt. 13:15; Prov. 23:7); emotion (Jn. 16:22), and will (Ro. 6:17, Col. 3:15). It enables him to think, feel, and do.

The heart is your "hidden man" (I Pet. 3:4); the real you that lies deep beneath that part of you that everyone sees.

The nature of man's Heart: Desperately Wicked

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

*** The heart of the problem is the problem of the HEART**

> *Matt 15:18-20*
> *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the **heart**; and they defile the man. For out of the **heart** proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man:"*

By nature, our hearts are depraved. Such depravity is evidenced by sin.

THE FLOW OF SIN

1)	2)	3)
Your Nature ⇒	**Your Attitude ⇒**	**Your Actions**
Soul/Spirit (Heart)	Thoughts/Motives	Actions/Behavior
State of being	Disposition	Deed
The principle of sin	The plot of sin	The practice of sin

1. Man's evil NATURE
⇒ 2. Man's evil thoughts
⇒ 3. Man's evil Actions
⇒ 4. Man's evil Lifestyle
⇒ 5. Man's evil Character
⇒ 6. Man's evil Destiny

Because of the inner, deep-rootedness of our hearts, we often do not even know our hearts (Jer. 17:9 - The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The problem that caused God to destroy the earth in the flood was a heart problem. (Gen. 6:5 - *"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.")*

One's fruit is an indication of one's heart (Lk. 6:45 - *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh").*

Proverbs 19:21
There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD, that shall stand.

Who is really in charge here?

God is in sovereign control over the affairs of men.

See: Isaiah 44:6-8 – He predicts the future
44:24-28 – 200 years before it happened, God predicted the rebuilding of Jerusalem and it's temple; He even called Cyrus (a future Persian ruler) by name before he was even born.
45:1; 9-13

Give Background to the Babylonian Captivity and the destruction of Jerusalem, it's walls and temple.

However God foretold through Jeremiah that they would return after 70 years (see Jeremiah 25:11-12)

> ***Jeremiah 25:11-12***
> *And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.*

How does God work in the hearts of men & women?

I. He <u>PREPARES</u> Hearts

(to motivate His tools (servants) – as the <u>Kings of Persia</u>:
Cyrus, Artaxerxes, & Darius – Ezra 1-7)

> ***Ezra 7:27***
> *Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem:*

See: Ezra 1:1-3 – God works in **Cyrus**

Ezra 4:1-f – Whenever God's work begins to succeed and advance at a rapid pace, the adversaries will rise up and seek to stop it. They will use deception (v.2), discouragement (v.4), fear tactics (v.4b), and slander (v.7-16) and finally force (under governmental approval) (v. 23).

Ezra 6: **Darius** makes a decree to not hinder the Jews, but that they should be supplied is money and resources to finish the work! (6:8-12)

Ezra 7: **Artaxerxes** makes a decree which allows the Jews to go back into their land. And even paid their way back (7:21-23; 25-28).

II. He <u>TURNS</u> Hearts

(to to accomplish His will – as the King of Assyria - Ezra 6:22)

Ezra 6:22

And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

Proverbs 21:1

The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.

III. He <u>DIRECTS</u> Hearts

(to fulfill His desires – as <u>Nehemiah</u> – Neh.2:12)

Nehemiah 2:12

And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at Jerusalem: neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

Nehemiah would be commissioned by Artaxerxes to return to Israel for the rebuilding of its city walls.

IV. He <u>HARDENS</u> Hearts

(to manifest His glory – as <u>Pharaoh</u> - Exodus 9:12, 10:1, 11:10*)*

Example: ***Psalms 105:25***
He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.

Romans 9:17-18
For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.

God showed mercy on Moses and Israel, but hardened Pharaoh.

Question: When God hardened Pharaoh, did He harden a heart that was previous <u>soft</u>? No!

[Actually, no man's heart is soft toward God (Rom. 3) unless God chooses to make it soft.]

When God hardened Pharaoh's heart, He was actually <u>keeping hard</u> that which was already hard.

He hardened his heart after Pharaoh himself hardened it [Pharaoh hardened his own heart (Ex. 8:15, 32; 9:34, 35); then God hardened it (Ex. 9:12, 10:1, 11:10). The hardening was only temporary (Ex. 9:16).]

If God can harden a hard-hearted Pharaoh (to which all Jews would have said "Amen"), cannot He also harden a hard-hearted nation? (SEE: Mt. 13:13-15; cp. Is. 6:10).

V. He <u>INSPIRES</u> Hearts

(to motivate His servants – as <u>Bezaleel</u> – Exodus 36:1-2)

Exodus 36:1-2

Then wrought Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whom the LORD put wisdom and understanding to know how to work all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, according to all that the LORD had commanded. And Moses called Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise hearted man, in whose heart the LORD had put wisdom, even every one whose heart stirred him up to come unto the work to do it:
Lu 24:32 And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?

VI. He <u>CHANGES</u> Hearts

(to return to His ways – as <u>David</u> – Psalm 51:10)

Psalms 51:10

Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.

VII. He <u>INSTRUCTS</u> Hearts

(to instill His wisdom – as <u>Solomon</u> – 1 Kings 10:24)

God asked Job the rhetorical question:
Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?
Job 38:36

2 Chronicles 9:23
And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.

1 Kings 10:24
And all the earth sought to Solomon, to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.

VIII. He <u>OPENS</u> Hearts

(to receive His Truth – as <u>Lydia</u> - Acts 16:14)

Conclusion:

Note: The **Devil** can also put thoughts into his victim's hearts:

- Secret unbelievers like: **Judas Iscariot**
  - ***John 13:2***
    And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;
- *Backslidden believers like:* ***Ananias***
  - ***Acts 5:3***
    But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?

How does God challenge and change hearts?

1) *Through the power of His Word, The Holy Scriptures*
   Hebrews 4:12
   For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

2) *Often through the ministry of His Servants (as with Elijah)*
   Malachi 4:6
   And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

3) *In direct answer to prayer (as with Solomon)*
   1 Kings 3:9
   Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?

***God's answer to man's problem: A <u>NEW HEART</u>**

God <u>purifies</u> people's hearts by faith (Acts 15:9) after He <u>opens</u> their heart (Acts 16:14).

What lost sinners need is a spiritual heart transplant
(Ezek. 36:25-26 - *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 an 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.*)

Rather than patching your exterior to hide the interior, why not ask God to create in you a clean heart? (Ps. 51:10).

The <u>Holy Spirit</u> resides in the "heart" of the believer (II Cor. 1:22; Gal. 4:6) and makes an indelible impression on our hearts (II Cor. 3:3).

2 Vital Lessons:

1) God is sovereign over mankind

2) Mankind is dependent upon God

What is sovereignty?

It describes His authority over all creation. His rulership, His authority, His throne.

God is "subject to none, influenced by none, absolutely independent; God does as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases" (Pink).

God says, "I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:10). God is working all things "after the counsel of His own will" (Eph. 1:11).

Words that describe God's sovereignty:

1) "The most high God" (Gen. 14:20)
2) "The God of gods (Dt. 10:17)
3) "The Lord of lords" (Dt. 10:17)
4) "King" (Ps. 29:10; 47:2, 3, 7, 8; Dan.4:37)
5) "Judge" (Ps. 75:7)
6) "Ruler" (Mic.5:2; Dan.4:34-35)
7) "Lawgiver" (Is. 33:22)
8) "The Author and Finisher" (Heb.12:2)

*God is in control!

a. God is sovereign over <u>HEAVEN & EARTH</u> (Deut. 10:14-17)
(God is in control of the <u>universe</u>)

God has every right and ability to be sovereign over creation because He is the Creator of it (II Ki. 19:15).

God is called: "Possessor of heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19)

The harlot Rahab admitted: "The LORD your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath" (Josh. 2:11).

1) God is in control of Heaven
"Thy kingdom come. Thy will be cone on earth as it is in heaven. Thine is the kingdom. . ." (Mt. 6:10, 13)

2) God is in control of Earth
". . . the earth is the Lord's" (Ex. 9:26).

Ps. 24:1 - "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world, and they that dwell therein."

SEE Ps. 50:10-12.

Who is regulating affairs on this earth today--God or the devil? (Pink). God or man? God or mere chance?

Even though the earth ultimately belongs to God and is ultimately under the control of God:

---He has ordained man to subdue it (Gen. 1:26-28; cp. Ps. 115:16)

---He has allowed Satan an element of influence over the world's system (Lk. 4:5-6; II Cor. 4:4).

a) God controls the earth's weather

(1) Miraculously - Exod. 9:29 (hailstorm in Egypt)
Josh. 10:12-14 (sun stood still for 24 extra hours)
James 5:17-18 (rain delay for 3 years & 6 months)

(2) Providentially -

The Lord upholds all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3)
"By Him all things consist (hold together)" (Col.1:17)

b) God controls the earth's food supply

EX: 7 year famine in Canaan & Egypt (Gen. 41:29-32)

b. God is sovereign over KINGS & NATIONS
(God is in control of emperors and empires)

Seated infinitely above every seat of power, exalted above every ruler, elevated above every emperor, raised above every King and Queen, advanced above every President, above every dignitary, every guru,…sits the Supreme One of the Universe.

1) God is in control of kings

God is "He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that bringeth the princes to nothing; He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity" (Is. 40:22-23).

SEE: Prov. 21:1 - "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD. . ." (cp. Ezra 6:22, 7:27).

It is God who removes kings and sets up kings (Dan. 2:21).

EX: Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 4:3, 17, 25, 35-37)
Belshazzar (Dan. 5:18, 26-28)

2) God is in control of nations (Deut. 32:8, 39)

He withholds land from those to whom He chooses (Deut. 2:19).

Don't seek exaltation from men, but from God (Ps. 75:6-7).

"The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble" (Ps. 90:1).

Every knee will one day bow (Is. 45:28).

c. God is sovereign over the lives of EACH INDIVIDUAL
(God is in control of all that has breath)

Moses called the LORD - "The God of the spirits of all flesh"
God Himself declared: "Behold, all souls are mine" (Ezek. 18:4).
"We are clay, He is the potter" (Jer. 18:6).

1) Man's personality and abilities from conception are in His hands (Ps. 139:13-16; Ex. 4:11)

Example of Jeremiah: God sovereignly prepared and ordained this man to be His prophet even before birth (Jer. 1:4-8)
Example of Paul: God…"separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace" (Gal.1:15)

Solomon observed "that the righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in the hand of God" (Eccl. 9:1).

No one has any strength unless God allows it; no one has any wealth, fame, wisdom or power unless God allows it.

As Jesus said to Pilate, who thought he had power to either crucify or release Jesus: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above." (Jn. 19:11a)

2) Man's circumstances of life are in His hands

God "hath determined the times before appointed" (Acts 17:26).

Hannah's testimony to God's sovereignty - I Sam. 2:6-8.

3) Man's very breath and heart beat are in His hands

In God's "hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:10).

". . . None can keep alive his own soul" (Ps. 22:29).

". . . I have the keys of death and hell" (Rev. 1:18).

Jesus has all authority (Mt. 28:19) over:
- a) the timing of death, and
- b) the place of the departed dead

"It is appointed (reserved) unto man once to die…" (Heb.9:27)

When God says you have breathed your last breath, you will not breath another"

Application:

Don't trust in "uncertain riches" but in the living God (I Tim. 6:15-17).

d. God is sovereign over the SALVATION of men
(God is in control of man's eternal destiny)

1) God alone chooses how He will save (Eph. 1:3-11)
(God's sovereignty and the plan of salvation)

Certainly, the One who owns Heaven reserves the right to determine the conditions that must be met in order for one to go into His Heaven.
It is presumption, pride, and foolishness for man to assume that he knows what is the way to eternal life without seeking to know god's way. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man.."

2) God alone chooses whom He will save (I Th. 2:13; Rom. 9:14-29)
(God's sovereignty and the people of salvation)

God's sovereignty in salvation:
- Jonah 2:9- "Salvation is of the Lord"
- John 3:27 – "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given him from above"
- John 15:16 – "You have not chosen me but I have chosen you"
- Eph.1:3 – "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world"
- II Tim.1:9 – "…before the world began"
- Titus 1:1 – "the faith of God's elect"
- I Pet.2:9 – "You are a chosen generation"

John 6:37
All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.
John 6:39
And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.
John 6:44
No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.
John 6:65
And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.
1 Peter 1:2
Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.
Acts 13:48
And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

Sovereignty does not exclude human responsibility

"Is man a mere puppet whose actions are determined by a behind-the-scenes God who pulls the strings as it pleases Him?" (Tozer, p. 184).

A belief in God's sovereignty is not a fatalistic attitude.

We cannot have a "whatever will be, will be" attitude.

God has given man a will by which we can choose to do His will or not to choose to do His will.

God is so sovereign that He can give mankind freedom of choice, and yet everything still fulfills His perfect plan.

"A God less than sovereign could not bestow moral freedom upon His creatures. He would be afraid to do so" (Tozer, p. 185).
Everything will turn out as God planned it would even though man is a free moral agent with liberty to make choices for which he is responsible.

Sovereignty does not exclude human accountability.

Man will answer for his own sin. God is not responsible for it.

Question regarding sovereignty:

If God controls everything and nothing happens outside of His allowing it:

--Why did He allow sin to enter the world? (SEE Rom. 9:22)

(1) So that He could show His wrath

God's wrath is one aspect of His nature that would forever go unseen if he had not allowed sin to enter the world.

(2) So that He could show His power

(a) God's power is seen in His ability to judge

(b) God's power is seen in His ability to redeem sinners

e. God is sovereign over FUTURE EVENTS
(God is in control of what lies ahead)

NOTE: The connection between God's pre-determined plan and His foreknowledge (Acts 2:23)

Isaiah 41:4, 42:9, 46:10, 48:5, 6

Acts 15:18 - "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world."

"Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commanded it not?" (Lam. 3:37).

* THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY

Because God is sovereign:

He needs no permission to do what He wants.

He goes to no one for advice.
(There is no higher court of appeal than God)

No one changes or interrupts His plan

1) God has every right to tell us what to do.

Is He on the throne of your life?

2) God is worthy of our complete trust.

Everything is under His control (Rom. 8:28)

Nothing happens by accident.

Nothing catches God off guard.

Nothing surprises God.

Why? Because He is sovereign over all.
Such a sovereign God is worthy of your trust.