

# Heartfelt Religion

by James C. Creel

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*The sermon 'Heartfelt Religion' by James C. Creel explores the biblical definition of the heart, its character, and the exercises of the heart in accepting the religion of Jesus Christ.*

**Topics:** "Heart Purity", "Spiritual Renewal"

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## Description

James C. Creel preaches on the importance of heartfelt religion, emphasizing the need for a genuine change of heart that leads to purity and holiness. He delves into the meaning of heartfelt religion, focusing on the affections and moral inner man, and the necessity of the heart being touched and controlled by the religion of Christ. Creel explores the character of the heart, highlighting the depravity of the unregenerated heart and the importance of good conduct reflecting a good heart. He discusses the exercises of the heart, such as understanding, believing, obeying, loving, feeling, and enjoying with the heart, all essential in experiencing heartfelt religion. The sermon culminates in the significance of the purity of heart, explaining how the heart is cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ through obedience to the truth, leading to a genuine change and a life of holiness.

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## Transcript

"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:20, 21.)

"Either make the tree good and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit. O, generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. 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." (Matt. 12:33-35.)

"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8.)

THESE verses of Scripture are not quoted simply as a text, but they are quoted because they contain some beautiful thoughts which I desire to bring out in this discourse.

The English word "Religion," is derived from a word in the Latin language which means: "To bind anew or back, to bind fast." The Christian Religion, subjectively, is piety or holiness; objectively it is that system of divine truth revealed in the New Testament which binds man "anew or back" to God. Man by his own wicked works is separated from God. The office of religion is to bring man back to God. [384]

The expression, Heartfelt Religion, in so many words, is not found in the Bible; but the idea contained in the expression is found in the Bible, or rather the idea contained in the expression, Religion of the Heart, is contained in the Word of God. The religion of Christ has much to do with the heart of man. In fact the religion of Christ may be termed a great heart work. A religion that does not touch and control the heart is worthless. A man will derive no benefit from a religion that does not affect his heart and whole life.

What is Heartfelt Religion? There seems to be much confusion in the minds of many as to what heartfelt religion really is. The religious parties who have said so much about heartfelt religion, and who have accused others of not knowing anything about heartfelt religion, have given us no well defined and intelligent answer to this question. With some, heartfelt religion is a change of heart; with some it is regeneration; with some it is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart; with some, it is conversion; and with others it is the pardon of sins. The best answer I am able to give this question in a brief definition is this: Heartfelt religion is the Christian religion cordially received into the heart, accepted by the heart, felt in the heart, enjoyed in the heart, producing the change of heart, purity of heart and holiness of life. The whole subject of heartfelt religion is made very plain by learning from the Holy Scriptures what is the heart, the [385] character of the heart, the exercises of the heart, the change of the heart, the purity of heart. Hence, my sermon on heartfelt religion will consist in bringing out, in the light of divine truth, the following points:

I. The Heart.

II. The Character of the Heart.

III. The Exercises of the Heart.

IV. The Change of Heart.

V. The Purity of Heart.

These points would indicate that the heart is really the subject of this discourse. While this is true from one point of view, yet we deem it proper to call the sermon Heartfelt Religion, from the fact that we are endeavoring to show from the teachings of the Scriptures what heartfelt religion is, by showing what the Scriptures teach in reference to the human heart.

I. The Heart.

What is the heart? This is a very important question, just here, in the beginning of our investigation. I have heard some persons speak of the heart as though the heart of flesh was the subject of religion. I have heard them talk in reference to the change of heart as though this literal heart of flesh was taken out of the human body and a new one put in its place. When the Bible speaks of the heart, morally, it means far more than this little throbbing [386] muscle, located in the left bosom, which beats away the seconds of time.

1. The heart, morally and religiously speaking, means the affections of the mind. In proof of this we invite attention to the following Scriptures. Jesus says: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matt. 6:20, 21.) Here we learn that persons may be living here in this world and at the same time have their hearts in heaven, where their treasures are; that is, their affections are in heaven with their treasures. This is true. Wherever we have our "treasures" deposited, there our affections are entwined.

Solomon says: "The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Ecc. 7:4.) In order to see the force of the term "heart" in this quotation, we will suppose something like this was in the mind of the inspired writer when he uttered this language: Here is a good man--a "wise" man, who learns that in an adjacent community, where a friend resides, that death has visited that friend's family and severed some of the dearest ties on earth, that sadness and gloom have thrown their dark mantle around that once happy family, but now a "house of mourning." This good man is so situated that he cannot go there in person to minister words of comfort to the [387] bereaved, but his heart is there! That is, his affections and sympathies are there. Here is a young man whose whole life is given to gaiety, pleasure and, 'mirth;" who, in a Bible sense, may be truly called a "fool." He has a special invitation to attend a grand "ball," a place of gaiety, the "house of mirth." He makes great preparations for his affections are much set upon this place of worldly pleasure. Ere the hour arrives for the giddy dance to begin he happens to a serious accident, perhaps a limb is broken and he is closely confined to his bed. The hour for the dance to begin has now come, but lie in person is not there. He imagines himself there. He can scarcely keep his feet still. He imagines he can hear the delightful music of that occasion, yet he is far away; but his heart is there, engaged in the merry dance. His affections are there.

Again, in the fifteenth chapter and sixth verse of Second Samuel, we have these words:" So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel." When King David's subjects came to him for judgment, Absalom, his son, stood by the way of "the gate," and when "any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand and took him and kissed him." By this act of kindness he stole their "hearts." What did he steal? He stole their affections. That is, Absalom, by his great tenderness and kindness, won the affections of "the men of Israel" and in this way stole their hearts. [388]

2. The word "heart" in the Scriptures is also used in a more comprehensive sense than simply the affections. It is used in a broad sense to mean the mind, the understanding, the whole moral inner man. In support of this we ask attention to the following declarations of God's word: "And he said unto them why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts!" (Luke 24:38.) "Repent therefore of this, thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee." (Acts 8:22.) Here we see the heart is represented as having "thoughts." A thought is a mental act. A mental act is an operation of the mind. It is the mind that thinks and the mind only. Therefore, the word "heart" in these citations means the mind. Paul says: "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10.) Now belief is an exercise of the mind. But the apostle says: "With the heart man believeth." Therefore the word "heart" in this passage must mean the mind.

Again: "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without a heart." (Hosea 7:11.) The word "heart" in this passage seems to mean just the opposite of the word "silly." A "silly" person is one without understanding. Hence, Ephraim also is like a silly dove without understanding. But the text says "Without heart." Hence, I conclude the word "heart" in this passage means the understanding. As the word "heart" in its broadest sense means the [389] mind itself, the understanding, it must also mean the whole moral inner man.

From all the passages of Scripture now adduced we arrive at this conclusion, namely: First, the word "heart," in the Scriptures, in its primary sense means the affections of the mind. Second, the word "heart" is used in the Scriptures in a broad sense to mean the mind itself, the understanding, the moral inner man. Having now a clear and complete and scriptural definition of the whole heart, we are now prepared to proceed to our second point in the discourse.

## II. The Character of the Heart.

When we come to speak of the character of the heart we mean the unregenerated heart; the heart that has been defiled by sin; the heart that has never been changed from the love of sin to the love of holiness; the heart that has never been melted and subdued by that divine love exhibited in the gospel of the grace of God.

1. The Bible, when it speaks of the character of the unconverted heart, draws a very dark picture. The prophet Jeremiah says: "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9.) Jesus who knew the human heart "and needed not that any should testify of man; for he knew what was in man," said: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, [390] blasphemies." (Matt. 15:19.) The heart that has been defiled by sin possesses a very black character. The unconverted heart is fearfully depraved. I would to God I could draw a veil over this dark picture of the unrenewed heart; but this dark picture is the awful consequences of sin in the soul. While the heart is depraved and morally deformed by committing sin, yet it is capable of being aroused to moral action by the power of motive. The Holy Spirit presents to the heart through the gospel the great motive, the love of God as exhibited in the awful death of His dear son, which moves it to love and serve Good. Then if this is true, the heart, "by nature," is not "totally" depraved; for if it was it could not be moved to moral action by the power of motive.

The heart is the great workshop where all our wicked actions are coined. Murder, lying, adultery, and all heinous sins ever committed first began in the heart. If we keep murder, lying and stealing out of the heart these terrible sins will be committed no more. If the source is kept pure, the stream will be pure. "Either make the tree good and his fruit good, or else make the tree corrupt and his fruit corrupt." This is an unerring law in nature that if the tree is good the fruit will be good. Just so in religion. If the heart is good the conduct will be good; and if the heart is corrupt the conduct will be corrupt. The old saying that "if the heart is right, all is right," is most certainly true. A truer [391] saying was never uttered by man. If we can only get men right in heart we can very soon get them right in their conduct. The great object of the religion of Jesus Christ is to make men right in heart and thereby make them right in life.

2. The character of the heart is exhibited in the conduct. If it is a good heart it will show itself in the practice of good things. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things." If it is an evil heart it will show itself in the practice of evil things. "An evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." The best way to learn the character of the heart of an individual is to examine closely the conduct of that individual. For it is said: "The tree is always known by its fruit." Sometimes in criticising the conduct of one we will say: "O, well, he does these wrong things, yet he is a good man at heart." Now, I deny that such a person is good at heart, for we know a good tree will not bring forth corrupt fruit. What is the fruit of this tree? Is it not bad. Therefore the tree must be bad. Men are wrong at heart when they do wrong, and that is the reason why they do wrong. Let us get our hearts right in the sight of God and our conduct will be all right. When Simon the Sorcerer, offered the Apostle Peter money to purchase the power of conferring the Holy Spirit by laying on of hands, Peter answered: "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter, for thy heart is [392] not right in the sight of God." His heart was not right, hence his great sin.

3. The words of the mouth tell what is in the heart. The text says: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." It is perfectly natural for us to talk about those things that are in our hearts. If you find a person always talking about the things of God and Christ and the church, you will find a person whose heart is filled with these things; and his conversation is an evidence of that fact. Again, if an individual's conversation is continually given to the things of the world, such as worldly pleasures, the fashions of the day, making money, that individual's heart is filled to the brim with these things: "Out of the

abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." As a further illustration of this thought, the following incident is in point: On one beautiful Lord's day morning in May, I rode out some four or five miles into the country to an appointment, accompanied by a friend and a brother in Christ, who was a tobacconist. We had not gone far before he began to tell me about his business; how many hogsheads of tobacco he had bought; what it had cost him and what he expected to realize for it. I was glad to learn that my friend and brother was getting along so well, but I did not care about having my mind filled so much with these things on the Lord's day when we were going to His house of worship. So I changed the subject to some religious topic; but soon the subject of tobacco was [393] brought up again and again. Now the trouble was, this dear brother's heart was filled with hogsheads of tobacco! I am afraid Christ can not dwell in a heart that is so filled up with the things of the world.

### III. The Exercise of the Heart.

The heart in accepting the religion of Jesus Christ undergoes quite a series of moral exercises. In fact, nearly every exercise of the mind is attributed to the heart in the Scriptures. We are said to think in the heart. Jesus said to the scribes "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" (Matt. 9:4.) We reason in the heart. Jesus said on another occasion to the scribes: "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8.) We meditate in the heart. David says: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer." (Psalms 19:14.) We imagine in the heart. God said to Noah: "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." (Gen. 8:21.) We purpose in the heart. Paul says: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give." (2 Cor. 9:7.) As a further illustration of the exercises of the heart, we ask attention to the following points:

1. In accepting the religion of Christ, which is pre-eminently a religion of the heart, we first understand with the heart. The Saviour says: "Understand with their heart and be converted and I should heal them." (Matt. 13:15.) We must understand [394] with the heart if we would intelligently receive the religion of Christ. From the much confusion of mind that is exhibited sometimes on the part of some persons, it seems they do not "understand with their heart." The religion of Christ is plain and simple; and is adapted to the humblest mind and heart. There is no reason for confusion nor doubt in this matter if we first understand with the heart.

2. We Believe with the Heart. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10.) When the Eunuch demanded baptism at the hands of Philip, Philip said to him, "If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest." (Acts 8:37.) The Christian religion requires a faith which is with the whole heart. A mere assent of the mind to the truth is not the faith required in the gospel, but the faith of the whole heart. The reason why so many have such weak faith is, because they do not believe with all the heart. This is a vital point and should be emphasized and impressed upon those who are called upon to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We want no half-hearted work here, but with the whole heart we are commanded to believe; and any other faith is not gospel faith.

3. Obey from the Heart. Paul says: "But God be thanked that (though) ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17, 18.) Only that obedience [395] which is "from the heart" is acceptable to God. A mere formal obedience to the commandments will avail nothing; but obedience from the very heart will always meet God's approval, and enable us to receive his blessings.

4. We Love with All the Heart. The Saviour said the first of all the commandments is this: "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength; this is the first commandment." (Mark 12:30.) When we love God with all the heart, we love him to the full extent of our ability. When we thus love God we will serve him, we will obey him. The Apostle John says "For this is the love of God (that is, the love we have for God) that we keep his commandments." (I John 5:3.)

5. We Feel with the Heart. When I say we feel with the heart I mean the moral feelings in the affections and soul. Paul, in speaking of the Gentiles hardening their hearts, says: "Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness." (See R. V. Eph. 4:19.) Here we learn that when we harden our hearts we are susceptible of moral feeling in the heart. When the religion of Jesus with all its softening power and influence is cordially received into the heart, then the heart feels the happy effects of this power and influence; and every emotion and noble feeling of the heart is aroused to exercise. A religion that we can not feel in our hearts is certainly a very cold and formal [396] religion and, therefore, worthless. The religion of Jesus received into the heart and obeyed from the heart will certainly produce in the heart a most delightful feeling of peace and happiness. If you want to feel religion in your hearts, just open the doors of your hard hearts, receive it, believe it and obey it, then you will certainly feel it. Do right and you will have good feeling in the heart. Do wrong and you will have bad feeling in the heart.

6. We Enjoy with the Heart. In Ecclesiastes, second chapter and first verse, we have these words "I said in mine heart, go to now, I will prove thee with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure." In this passage is taught that we enjoy with the heart. The intelligent Christian in the practice of religion enjoys much with the heart. He enjoys its pleasures, its comforts and its rewards. He can truly say:

"'Tis religion that can give,  
Sweetest pleasures while we live;  
'Tis religion must supply  
Solid comfort when we die."

Then as the sum total of the exercises of the heart in submitting to the religion of Jesus our Lord, we have this: Understanding with the heart, believe with the heart, obey from the heart, love with the heart, feel with the heart and enjoy with the heart. Can we get any more of the heart into religion? Certainly not. A religion that embraces all of this is surely a religion of the heart, or if you please, heart-felt religion. [397]

#### IV. Change of Heart.

This is one of the most vital points in the religion of Jesus. We cannot put too much stress on the great necessity of the change of heart. If the sinful heart is unchanged man's religion is all worthless. There must be a thorough, radical change of the whole heart in entering into the Christian life. It gives me great pleasure to make strong emphasis on this point, as my brethren have been accused of denying the change of heart. This is one of the most unjust and wicked charges that has ever been made against that religious body known as Disciples of Christ. Permit me to say, and reiterate, in behalf of my brethren, that we do believe and teach from all our pulpits and in our literature, "that the heart of the sinner must be wholly changed in his conversion to Christ." There must be a moral revolution in the whole inner man in becoming a Christian. The heart must be changed from the love of sin and the world to the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. The heart must be changed from the love of sin to the love of holiness. The heart must be

changed from the state of rebellion against Christ to a state of willing, loving and cheerful obedience to Christ. The whole heart must be completely swallowed up in the holy will of Jesus. All of this must absolutely take place in the heart of a person before that person is a proper or scriptural subject for Christian baptism. Baptism in no sense changes the heart. All the oceans of water can never change the heart of the [398] poor sinner. The sinner that looks to baptism for the change of heart is fearfully deluded. Further, it is not only sinful, but it is morally impossible, to scripturally baptize a person whose heart is unchanged. Why, I would not baptize a person to save my right arm if I did not have sufficient evidence to believe his heart was changed. If his heart was not changed before baptism his baptism with an unchanged heart would be solemn mockery in the sight of God. Let me say here that it is a capital item with the Disciples of Christ that the heart must be changed in the sinner's turning to God. To substantiate this I will quote a few extracts from the writings of some of my brethren Bro. Moses E. Lard in his "Review of Campbellism Examined," page 162, says: "If, it may be truly said, there is any one subject on which Mr. Campbell has shed the whole splendor of peculiar eloquence, it is the necessity--the absolute necessity--of a change, a moral change, a spiritual change, a deep, vital, pervading change of the whole inner man, preparatory to baptism." Grand words! Can there be any more emphasis put upon the necessity of the change of heart than we find here in these emphatic words?

I now give a quotation from the great and good A. Campbell, found in the "Campbell-Rice Debate," page 544: "But our opponents have done us a great deal of injustice, in representing us as pleading for 'water regeneration.' They have endeavored to [399] preach us down, and sing us down, and write us down, by holding us up to public reprobation, as advocates of a mere baptismal regeneration; but they have not succeeded, nor will they succeed, with any who will hear us or read us on these subjects. No man believes more cordially, or teaches more fully, the necessity of a spiritual change of our affections--a change of heart--than I do. I have said a thousand times, that if a person were immersed twice seven times in the Jordan for the remission of his sins, or for the reception of the Holy Spirit, it would avail nothing more than wetting the face of a babe, unless, his heart is changed by the word and spirit of God. I have no confidence in any instrumentality, ordinance, means, or observance, unless the heart is turned to God."

Now, then, away with that old false charge that, the Disciples of Christ, do not believe in the change of the heart before baptism. It is a great pity, that right here, on this all important and capital point, the disciples are greatly misunderstood and often shamefully misrepresented. It is exceedingly painful to hear the false charge often made that we, the disciples, believe and teach the abominable doctrine of "baptismal regeneration," or "water salvation." A doctrine which we abhor with all our hearts. Only a short time since, I noticed in Philip Schaff's "History of the Christian Church," if I mistake not, these words: "Alexander Campbell, who believed baptism was regeneration." How could this learned [400] and eminent gentleman make such a statement, when Mr. Campbell has made such plain declarations just to the opposite in the above extract from "Campbell-Rice Debate," page 544. Surely this eminent scholar did not intend to misrepresent Mr. Campbell.

Having now sufficiently emphasized the absolute necessity of the change of heart before one can be baptized, we ask the question:

1. What Is the Change of Heart? In order to answer this question we must keep before our minds that other question: What is the heart? We have already learned from the Scriptures that the heart, primarily, is the affections of the mind; and, secondly, the heart is the mind itself, the moral inner man. Then it follows that the change of heart is the change of affections, the change of mind. This change of affections has

reference to sin. That is, the heart is changed from the love of sin to the love of holiness; from the love of sin and the world to the love of Christ; from the sin of disobedience to the loving and cheerful obedience to Christ. All this is the change of heart. The change of heart may imply more than this; but one thing is certain, it can never mean less than this radical and thorough change of the affections in reference to sin.

2. How Is the Change of Heart Produced? This is very important. I answer this important question in this way: The heart is changed by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Faith controls and directs the affections of the mind. We can have no love or [401] affection for any object till we first believe that object possesses something worthy of our affections. It is utterly impossible for us to love an object that we do not believe possesses any quality worthy of our affection or love. The affections or the heart is changed from one object to another object just as we have faith in that object. Illustration: A young man believes that a certain young lady possesses those traits of mind and heart that are lovely and worthy of his affections; he believing this, centers his love and affection upon this lovely object. After while he sees another young lady, a superior lady to the first one in every respect, more lovely and beautiful in all the graces of mind and heart, a far more worthy object of his heart's love. He believes all this in reference to this other lady; and believing this, his heart is changed from the love of the first lady to the love of the second lady. Just so: The sinner loves sin and the world. His heart is given to these. The gospel presents Jesus to the lost sinner in all his beauty, love, purity. One "altogether lovely," one worthy of all the affections of his mind, one who is "able to save to the uttermost." The sinner believes all this; and thus by his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ his heart is changed from the love of sin to the love of Christ. He is now subdued in heart. He hates what he once loved, and loves what he once hated. He humbly cries: "My Lord, my Saviour, what wilt thou have me do?."

In the conversion of the Apostle Paul, there is to [402] my mind, a beautiful illustration of the change of heart. Paul had no love for Christ nor his disciples. He hated them with intense hatred. In speaking of his hatred toward the innocent disciples of Christ, he says: "Being exceedingly mad against them I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts 26:11.) He was a blood-thirsty persecutor, a hater of Christ; for he says: "I verily thought with myself that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." (Acts 26:9.) With this feeling of hatred in his heart he starts to the city of Damascus on his bloody errand of persecution against Christ and his disciples. As he journeyed near the city, "suddenly there shone around him a light from Heaven; and he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying to him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, who art thou, Lord? and the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks; and he trembling and astonished said: Lord what wilt thou have me do? The Lord said unto him, arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do." (Acts 9:3-6.) What a wonderful change has taken place in the heart of Saul! A few hours since he was a hater and a persecutor of Christ. Now he is an humble penitent at the feet of Jesus crying with great anguish of soul: "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?" What Saul now saw and heard forced the great conviction into his heart that he was a great sinner, a [403] persecutor, lost and ruined; and that the despised Jesus of Nazareth was indeed his long looked for Messiah, his only Saviour. He believed all this with all his heart. His faith in Jesus changed his heart from hatred and persecution to that state of love and submission to Jesus which caused him to tremble and cry to Jesus for salvation in the touching words "Lord, what wilt thou have me do?"

"But," says one, "is not this great change of heart which you have emphasized so much produced by the Holy Spirit operating on the heart?" Certainly, this change of heart is produced by the Holy Spirit. There could be no change of heart in the religion of Christ without the influence of the Holy Spirit upon the heart.

But the real question is How does the Holy Spirit produce this change in the heart? I answer: By producing faith in the heart which produces the change of heart. And how does the Holy Spirit produce faith in the heart? Answer: By and through the word of God. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. " (Rom. 10:17.) So then it is just from the point of view we look at this matter. If we look at the agent, the Holy Spirit, in the conversion of the sinner we say the Holy Spirit produces this change in the heart; and if we look at the office of faith in conversion we say the heart is changed by faith. Both ideas are true when looked at properly. [404] Perhaps some one is ready to ask: "How can faith change the heart?" Strictly speaking, it is the thing believed that produces the change in the affections and mind. It is not the kind of faith we have, but the thing believed. The Scriptures know nothing of kinds of faith. There may be little faith, much faith, weak faith or strong faith; but not kinds of faith. These words express degree, not kinds. "All faith is one, not in kind, but in object the difference lay." Now the effects of faith grow out of the thing believed. Sadness, joy, love and hatred are produced in the heart by the thing believed. If we were to believe that in one hour we should be put to death, our hearts would be filled with overwhelming sorrow. Then if we could believe that this terrible sentence of death had been recalled, our hearts would be changed from great sorrow to great joy. If we have an object of hatred and could be induced to believe that this object is really an object of love and devotion, believing this fact, our hearts would be changed from hatred to love. Just so in the gospel we have the Lord Jesus Christ presented to us in his agony and death on the cross. We believe he died for us. We believe he went down to the cold grave and abolished death and brought life and immortality to light by his glorious resurrection. We believe he is our only Saviour, believing all this, our hearts are changed from the love of sin to the love of Jesus our Saviour. [405]

## V. The Purity of Heart.

Jesus in his sermon on the "Mount" in describing the moral character of the subjects of his kingdom, which was then "at hand," says: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God." (Matt. 5:8.) No man can see, or enjoy God with an impure heart. It is only the pure in heart that can have sweet communion and fellowship with God in this world and in the world to come. Christians are commanded to love one another with a pure heart. "See that ye love another with a pure heart fervently." (I Peter 1:22.) Paul said to Timothy: "Follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." (II Tim. 2:22.) The great end or purpose of the gospel is a pure heart. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." (I Tim. 1:5.) From these Scriptures we learn that Purity of Heart is a most vital point in the Christian religion.

1. What Is the Purity of Heart? It is not simply the change of heart. The change of heart is absolutely necessary to the purity of heart, and always precedes the purity of heart, but the purity of heart is far more. The purity of heart is not conversion. Conversion is essential to, and goes before the purity of heart; but the purity of heart is still a great deal more. The purity of heart is the heart cleansed, purified and made free from sin and the guilt of sin, [406] involving purification of the soul. So then the purity of heart implies the forgiveness or remission of sins; for as long as there is sin or guilt in the heart there will be an impure heart.

2. How Is the Heart Made Pure or Cleansed? By the blood of Jesus Christ. In the gospel there is revealed but one cleansing element. That element is "The Precious blood of Christ." The Apostle John says: "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7.) In the book of Revelation we have these words: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood." (Rev. 1:5.) The Apostle Paul says: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." (Col.

1:14.) These passages of Scripture clearly prove that the one cleansing and purifying element, in the purification of the heart and soul, is the blood of Jesus Christ. I do not mean here that the literal blood of Christ literally cleanses the heart and soul from sin. I mean that by virtue of the shedding of the precious blood of Christ that God can and does take away all sin and guilt from the heart and soul of the obedient character. Thus it is that the blood of Christ cleanses or purifies the heart and soul from all sin and guilt. It is a great mistake to represent the Holy Spirit as a cleansing element or agent. Nowhere in the Bible is it said that the Holy Spirit cleanses or purifies the heart. The office of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of the sinner is [407] to convert and sanctify through the word of truth. So we may say, the work of conversion and sanctification is begun, carried on, and consummated, by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the divine truth.

The Apostle James in writing to those persons whom he addresses as my "brethren" (see James 1:2), says: "Purify your hearts, ye double-minded." (James 4:8.) I do not understand the apostle here to mean that the Christian can really purify his heart in the sense of purifying it from sin and guilt; for we have seen that the blood of Christ alone can do this; but the two-minded, or double-minded Christian is to put away from his heart all the evil thoughts, desires and passions, and thus purify his heart.

3. When Is the Heart Made Pure or Cleansed? There is a time when this purification, cleansing and freedom from sin takes place. Let us lay aside all opinions and notions of men; and be guided solely by divine truth. What say the Scriptures? The Scriptures teach when we obey from the heart, the divine truth, then our hearts are purified, cleansed, and made free from sin. In other words, when we turn to God, in obeying the truth, then our sins are forgiven and then our hearts are made pure. Now, for the Scripture proof:

The Apostle Paul says: "Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then [408] made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." (Rom. 6:17, 18.) When were they made free from sin and thus had their hearts made pure? When they obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine or divine truth. Is not this exceedingly plain?

The Apostle Peter says: "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." (I Peter 1:22.) Here we have purification of soul and heart. When do we have this purification of soul and heart? "In obeying the truth," then we have this purification of soul and heart.

The apostle in speaking of what God has done for both Gentile and Jew, says: "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) The word "faith" in this passage is used in its objective sense meaning "The Faith," the truth, the gospel. In the original we have tee (the) pistei (faith). In Acts 6:7 we have: "And a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Now we know in this second passage that the express "the faith" means the truth or the gospel. But in the original, in both passages, it is precisely the same expression, tee pistei, the faith, the truth. (See Westcott & Hort's Revised Greek-English New Testament). Therefore, the word "faith" in Acts 15:9, means the truth. Then the correct idea is, "purifying their hearts by the [409] truth." Now, in what sense can it be said that our hearts are purified by the truth? In this sense When we obey the truth then our hearts are made pure by the blood of Christ.

The Apostle John says: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (I John 1:7.) The words, "the light," in this

passage means the truth. To walk in the light is to walk in the truth; to walk in the truth is to obey the truth. Now, the apostle says "If we walk in the light," that is, obey the truth, the blood of Christ will cleanse us from all sin. Therefore, when we do walk in the light, or obey the truth, then our hearts are made pure by being cleansed from all sin with the blood of Christ. Now, the whole conclusion, from the foregoing, is this: By turning to God, in obeying the divine truth, our hearts are then made pure by being cleansed from all sin and guilt with "the precious blood of Christ." In other words: When we believe in Jesus with all our hearts, confess the name of Jesus with our mouths, repent sincerely of all our sins, and are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, then we have the forgiveness of sins; and thus our hearts are made pure by being cleansed from all sin.

Then, we say to the poor sinner: Understand with the heart, believe with the heart, obey from the heart, love with all the heart; and you will have the [410] change of heart; the purity of heart; and then you will feel and enjoy heartfelt religion. What more heartfelt religion could any one desire? This is the religion that "will do to die with." This is the religion that will enable the saint of God to sing the song of triumph in the hour of death. This is the religion that will cheer our poor, weary hearts as we toil for Jesus amid the conflicting fortunes of this life of sorrow and tears. This is the religion that will at least give us a happy home in the "sweet by and by" where we shall bask in the sunlight of our Saviour's love throughout the great eternity of God! Amen.

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