

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

As a young man who was unsaved I attended a church that had John 3:16 posted on the front wall of the church.

John 3:16 (NKJV)

16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

As I would read that verse week after week I would tell myself, “God can’t send me to hell because I believe.” And then I would go out and live like the devil. I was SELF-DECEIVED. I believed what I wanted to believe with no life change. I didn’t want to go to hell so in my heart I claimed I believed.

Jeremiah 17:9–10 (NKJV)

9 “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?”

10 I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.

You see what is in the heart comes out in the life. It is shown in a person’s “ways” – in “the fruit of his doings.”

When I was 21 I actually got saved and my life changed! One day as a brand new Christian I was reading through Romans and when I came to 10:9-10 I said to myself: “That’s it! Previously I had an intellectual assent but it was not real in my heart.” In that moment I saw it’s all about the HEART OF THE MATTER!

Romans 10:9–10 (NKJV)

9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Jesus diagnosed the problem of the “religious Jews” of His day as being that of a HEART problem saying, “*These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me.*” (Matt. 15:8). In the parable of the Sower and the Soils Jesus illustrated that true conversion is seen in those who “*having heard the word with a noble and good HEART, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*” (Lk. 8:15 – emphasis mine) In Romans 2:29 Paul emphasized that a true Jew in right relationship with God is “*one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the HEART...*” (emphasis mine). In Romans 10:9-10 Paul showed that a saving faith

believes *“in your HEART”* and that *“with the HEART one believes unto righteousness”* (emphasis mine).

NOTE: The heart and the will are very closely related and are often used interchangeably. If a distinction should be noted, perhaps it would be that the heart is a broader concept relating to the affections, emotions, thoughts, volition/will, etc. The will is more narrow relating mainly to one aspect of the heart – that is to the volition relating to choices, decisions, and the intentions of the heart. In salvation, repentance is seen to be a response of the heart in that it is an act of the will.

In Genesis 6:5 God saw that the wickedness of man was great *“and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* Psalm 28:3 speaks of those who have evil *“in their hearts.”* Psalm 62:10 counsels do *“not set your heart”* on evil things. Psalm 119:2 says those who seek God *“with the whole heart”* are blessed. In Matthew 5:28 Jesus said that whoever looks at a woman to lust after her commits *“adultery with her in his heart.”* 2 Peter 2:14 speaks of those who *“have a heart trained”* in sinful intentions.

In Luke 24:32 we find that the *“hearts of the disciples”* burned within them as Christ shared the Scriptures. In Acts 11:23 Barnabas encouraged the believers *“that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.”* In Acts 21:13 Paul spoke of weeping that was *“breaking my heart”*. In recounting their conversion, Paul said of the believers in Romans 6:17, *“You obeyed from the heart...”*. Hebrews 4:12 says the living word is powerful *“and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.”*

“Commonly the ‘heart’ is regarded as being the seat of the intellect, the feelings, and the will”. - ***The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary***

James 2:19 (NKJV)

19 You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!

Even the demons believe intellectually and they tremble emotionally, but they are not saved. What is missing in their “faith” is a HEART allegiance to Jesus! It is with “the heart one believes unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). The difference between saving faith and demon-like faith is seen in the HEART!

1 Samuel 16:7 (NKJV)

7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see

as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”