

How's Your Heart?



***"Moreover,
I will give you a new heart
and put a new spirit within you;
and I will remove
the heart of stone from your flesh
and give you a heart of flesh."
Ezekiel 36:26 (nasb)***

These words were spoken to the people of Israel, but the truth is, God, thankfully, does the same for each one of us who choose to accept His great grace offering to us. That grace was brought to us through Christ Jesus paying the penalty of our sin. My sin. Your sin. The cost was more than we ourselves could pay, it is such an incredible gift that He, the only One that could, would pay the debt WE owed.

When you think of the heart it took for Him to offer Himself in such a horrific way, we mostly think of His physical suffering. Personally, I'm convinced that it wasn't the spikes driven into His hands and feet that held Him on that cross, it was His heart. He hung there out of His deep, deep love for every single person in the world. While the physical suffering was unbearable, the real suffering for Christ came when He took on every sin ever committed, sin that was not His own, sin that separated Him from the Father and the Holy Spirit for the first time. He knew that would be the price. But, His heart for us caused Him to endure every last one of them. From the smallest to the largest, sin separates from God. The result of that separation is a heart of stone.

What is the heart I'm referring to? Obviously, I'm not talking about the physical, blood pumping machine, look at these definitions. The heart is:

*"Responsive, formally, heart of flesh, i.e., have a response to God, with a focus on being alive, as a figurative extension of having a heart made of soft-tissue and alive, also so can be flexible, or penetrated."*¹

Soft and alive, meant to live and be responsive - that is the heart God gives. Responsive to His love, to His grace. He makes us alive in Christ Jesus.

Here's another definition:

*"In its abstract meanings, "heart" became the richest biblical term for the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature."*²

How's Your Heart?

The heart expresses our inner nature. That is why when we accept Christ we are given a new heart to express that new nature. Our old sinful nature is put to death and new life in Christ means we have a new heart, a heart of flesh, one with the ability to be responsive to God.

So many hearts are hardened against God. We see it every day, people who deny His existence, people who aren't willing to surrender their will to Him. All around us are people with hearts of stone. May I ask, how's your heart? Maybe now is the time to stop and have a check up of the heart. Is it soft and responsive to God, or hardened to the direction He has for you? Is it hardened because of the circumstances around you? Are you willing to give Him a little of your heart but can't bring yourself to give Him all of it? When responding to others, is it His heart of forgiveness that extends grace as its needed, the very grace He's given you?

His desire is to change that heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. One that is alive and softened. One that is forgiven and forgives others. In Christ, that transition is possible. Through His Spirit the softening takes place. All it takes is for you to say, Yes.

Father, the Great Physician, You perform the amazing surgery of heart transplants, taking our hearts of stone and exchanging it with a heart of flesh so that we can respond to Your Spirit's leading. Oh Lord God, how I want to be responsive to You, to set my heart only toward You and what You have for me. Help each of us to give our hearts completely to You today, and change us. I ask in Christ's name. Amen

¹Swanson, J. (1997). Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc.)

²Bowling, A. (1999). 1071 . R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. Chicago: Moody Press.)