

The “Heart” of the Matter

Colossians 2:20-23 (ESV)

20 If with Christ you died to the elemental spirits of the world, why, as if you were still alive in the world, do you submit to regulations—

21 “Do not handle, Do not taste, Do not touch”

22 (referring to things that all perish as they are used)—according to human precepts and teachings?

23 These have indeed an appearance of wisdom in promoting self-made religion and asceticism and severity to the body, but they are of no value in stopping the indulgence of the flesh.

This morning I am going to cover something that unfortunately is growing in numbers among Apostolics. Self-mutilation, the idea of cutting (or some other method to bring harm to the body) due to guilt because of hurts brought to our lives because of sin.

Let me break it down in easily understandable language. You know you shouldn't be doing what you are doing; you really have tried your best to try to avoid it; you are trying to “starve it out,” yet the desire always comes back and you feed it. The guilt you have after the deed is finished consumes you—I am a bad, nasty, terrible person and I deserve to be punished. Since you don't feel that God is punishing you, you thereby take on the role of “God” and punish yourself by some kind of self-harm because that is what you deserve and it makes you “feel better.” The practice is called asceticism and it is what the great Apostle Paul is dealing with here. The Catholic Church waters it down quite a bit with “confession”; it was bad; it still is bad. If I just keep trying to “starve” it out and deny myself, it will finally go away, but it hasn't gone away.

Titus 2:11-12

11 For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

12 Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;

I have tried that; I am trying that; I am drowning in guilt and shame. That is because you have forgotten where sin originates—which is in the heart. You

will never change the problem until you first realize that you need God to change your heart.

Jeremiah 17:9-10

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

10 I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

You have already found out that, you cannot deprive yourself, ignore your desires, or beat your will into submission. Why? Because your mind and will aren't the center of your decision-making process. Your heart is. If you don't love something, you won't do it. If you don't hate something, you won't leave it alone.

Luke 6:45

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.

We need to always remember the things that are in our heart will end up in our lives.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

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.

27 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.

When you really allow the Holy Ghost to change your heart, you will see your life begin to change.

Colossians 3:1-7

1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.

2 Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

3 For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

5 Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry:

6 For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience:

7 In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them.

1Samuel 10:9

9 And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart: and all those signs came to pass that day.

Saul rejected God's heart transplant. When we receive the Holy Ghost, that heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh. Get back to the well and drink deep from the fountain that never runs dry. Life and circumstances have put that old heart of stone back in. You need to break up the fallow ground.

Jeremiah 4:3-4

3 For thus saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench *it*, because of the evil of your doings.

RPS