

Christianityworks
God Wants to Heal My Heart
0060-4
The End Game – A New Life

If our heart; if our desires are pulling in two different directions, let me ask you something: how much peace are we going to have in our lives? How effective are we going to be in pouring the love and grace of God out into a lost and hurting world?

The Heart of God

I don't know if you remember that old Frank Sinatra song "I Did it My Way"? But that could well be the by-line for the way that I decided to live my life. I grew up in a home where we went to church. I had plenty of opportunity in my teenage years to give my life over to God and I kind of did. But as I grew up and realised there was money to be made in the world out there, I decided there was only one way to live my life – my way.

And in part that was good. I got a great education, school, university, post graduate, had a series of great jobs. I was earning a lot of money, had my own company – all the 'me' things that we are supposed to have – all the symbols of success and comfort and luxury but the greatest contradiction in life for me is that those things didn't make me happy. And the more they didn't, the harder I tried and the less they did. In fact, it felt like bitter poison.

All this success – at least, that's the label I wanted to use, 'success', but it didn't fit. And there's a reason it didn't fit. I discovered that reason in the words of Moses, written thousands of years ago, but they're as true today as they were back then. Have a listen – if you've got a Bible, grab it – Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 18:

"Make sure there is no man or woman, clan or tribe among you today whose heart turns away from the Lord our God to go and worship the gods of those nations; make sure there is no root among you that produces such bitter poison."

Bitter poison, indeed!

Today is the last programme in a series I've called "God Wants to Heal My Heart" and we are going to look at how God does that. Over the last few weeks we've seen how passionate God is about changing our hearts; about drawing us close; about getting that heart connection with us - that's about real relationship and real intimacy. It's powerful stuff!

Let me share with you again that wonderful prayer that Jesus prayed just before they crucified Him. He was in the Garden in Gethsemane and you can read this in John chapter 17, verse 24. This is what He prayed:

"Father, I desire that those also, whom you have given to me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory, which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of this world."

He went to the cross so that we could be with Him where He is. That's how much He wants to have a heart connection with us and for that to happen our heart has to change. And when our heart's turned away and how often it strays, we need to turn back to Him. Problem is it is so hard to do that in our own strength. Our hearts become hard and obstinate and we think to ourselves, 'How can I ever change?'

But here's the good news: we don't have to do the changing – God's going to do that, all we have to do is take that first step...the step of turning back and when we do that God hears us and God acts. Have a listen to this: Second Kings chapter 22, verse 19:

"Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore at your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the Lord."

See, God will honour that first step. God will take that first step and He will rejoice in it and forgive us when we humble ourselves before Him and say, "Lord, I've just heard You calling me. I was wrong! I turned my heart against You. I tried to do it my way and I'm sorry." You know what they call that? They call it repentance – turning back to God.

And you know why I am sharing this with you today? Because I believe that God is calling some people to turn back to Him today. Do you hear Him calling? Why don't you pray this prayer with me right now?

Father, I have heard You today. Your Word is so clear; it rings in my heart, clear as a bell. I know it's You, I know it's true and I can't heal my heart on my own but I can let You move me by Your Word and right here and now I want to 'fess up and say, 'I've been wrong, I'm sorry. I mean my heart aches

with pain – that’s what I mean and this day; this moment, I turn back to You. I know that I’m forgiven through the sacrifice that Jesus made for me on that cross. Come, O God and heal my heart. It’s in Jesus name I pray. Amen.

That prayer, my friend, if you prayed it with me, is a powerful prayer. It is a prayer which God heard and it is a prayer that God will honour in the mightiest ways, in the days and weeks and months ahead. And you will look back to the moment when you prayed that prayer and see how the mighty hand of God began to work in your life, because from this moment on, God is going to move in your heart.

See, this is one of the things that I didn’t expect. I expected that this mighty, wonderful God would require me to become mighty and wonderful, but that’s not the case. Time and time again we see how God moves people’s hearts. King David understood that when he prayed in Psalm 51, verse 10:

‘Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me.’

Did David go to God and say, ‘God, I stuffed up. God, I committed adultery and I murdered a man and I just know that I have to clean up my act. I just know I have to work hard to improve the way I live my life and I promise You God, I’m going to do better next time. From now on, I’m going to do better.’

No! If you read the first bit of Psalm 51, the first thing he does is he goes to God and confesses that sin and prays a prayer of repentance, much like the one that you and I have just prayed. But David knows that’s not enough. David knows he has to change so instead of promising to change, he asked God for the one thing that is going to change him – a change of heart: “*Create in me a pure heart, O God and renew a steadfast spirit within me.*”

David asks God to do it by His Spirit because David knows that he’s not strong enough to do this on his own. He needs the power of God to change his heart and so that’s exactly what he asks God for. Listen to what another Psalmist writes – Psalm 73, verse 26:

“My flesh and my heart fail but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”

My friend, God wants to change our hearts. He has the power to do it. His Spirit in us is the power to change. He is the only power to change. There are so many people trying to turn their lives around;

there are so many people working harder; trying harder to please God. Listen to me: it doesn't work. The 'work harder' strategy is going to fail because God is the only power to change.

And for those who feel weak and powerless, let me share with you these words from the Apostle Paul – a man who through the struggles and the trials of his life had discovered an amazing truth about God's power. This comes from Ephesians chapter 1, verses 18 and 19. Paul says:

"I pray also that the eyes of your heart might be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

In other words, Paul's saying: I pray that you would come to know the incomparably great power that you already have because you believe in Jesus. The same power that made Jesus to rise from the dead - that power you already have and that power is the power to change. That power is the power for your new life. Cast yourself on that power and let God change your heart. How about it?

An Undivided Heart

Let's spend some time right now looking at a heart condition that plagues many a Christ follower - indecisiveness: an indecisiveness so deep that it tears us apart. In the Bible that condition is known as a 'divided heart' - a heart torn between God and all the other things in life that we can chase down - a heart torn between a deep desire to give our all to Him and the intensely human desire to chase after the gratification that this world peddles.

Imagine for a moment a football team where the players can't agree which end of the field they are defending and which end they're attacking. Half the team thinks it's one way and the other half thinks it's the other way. Huh! You don't have to be Einstein to figure it out. They're probably not going to be the most effective team on the field that day and they're probably not going to win the game. It's blindingly, glimpsingly obvious, isn't it? Yet, how many people live their lives like that?

Let me get right in your face with this today – I'm not going to mamby pamby around because while God's passionate desire is to heal our hearts, there is often little He can do because our heart is divided. Now there is a principle that Jesus spoke of on this very subject. It was in a completely different context, but the principle stands. They all saw the miracles that He was doing and so some of

the religious leaders accused Him of being the devil. They were saying that He was demonised and that all these amazing displays of power were being, well, powered not by heaven but by hell.

Jesus answered His critics this way – Matthew chapter 12, verses 25 and 26:

“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand?”

Makes perfect sense, doesn't it? It's the football team analogy! Again in Mark chapter 3, beginning at verse 24:

“If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.”

And if our heart; if our desires are pulling in two different directions, let me ask you something: how much peace are we going to have in our lives? How much power are we going to have in our lives? How effective are we going to be in pouring the love and grace of God out into a lost and hurting world?

One of the things that shocked me when I started scratching around in the Bible was how often this particular phrase appeared: *“with all your heart.”* Have a listen to just a few:

Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 29: *“But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 5: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.”*

Deuteronomy 11, verse 13: *“So if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.”*

See, over and over again, it's in the same context – being committed to God, loving Him, seeking Him with all your heart. There are so many people who want the benefits of believing in Jesus but haven't thrown their hearts into it. There are so many people who want the peace and the joy of knowing Jesus; who want the power for things to change in their lives for the glory of God but

they're house is divided; their kingdom is divided; their heart is divided.

God isn't looking for part of us. God isn't looking for some half-hearted commitment. The last time I checked, there were no biblical dispensations for honouring and serving and obeying Him like: 'Well, Berni, if it suits you; if it doesn't cost you anything; if it's safe; if you won't lose anything; if it's convenient,' and yet sometimes we behave as though those dispensations are written in there. So many Christians; people who love Jesus, believe in Jesus but they do it half-heartedly.

Have a listen to what James writes about the getting of wisdom. James chapter 1, verses 5 to 8:

"If any of you lacks wisdom he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all that he does."

God doesn't want part of us; He wants all of us. He doesn't want some weak, double-minded, half-hearted commitment. He is calling us today, to love Him and serve Him and seek Him – my friend, with all our hearts – every last little bit; every last ounce of what we have left. That's how much He wants. Let me ask you something – are you in or are you out? Because there's no half-measurers; no lukewarm, there's no comfort qualifiers on this commitment.

How do I know if I am committed? Well, here are a few questions that I use from time to time, in my own life, as a litmus test:

Am I prepared to stand completely alone in this world for Christ?

Am I prepared to lose everything to follow after Him?

Is there anything that I wouldn't give up in order to follow His call?

Those are telling questions! They're important questions because the one who is double-minded; half-hearted; lukewarm shouldn't expect to live in a place where he or she receives the joy of the Lord and the power of their salvation. Yes, God wants to heal our hearts, but in order for Him to do that, we have to hand the whole heart over to Him so that He can heal the whole thing.

Here's a prayer that King David prayed along those very lines; Psalm 86, verses 11 to 13:

*"Teach me your way O Lord, and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name.
I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify your name forever.
for great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from
the depths of the grave."*

Make Music In Your Heart

There's something special about music. I mean, if I listen to one of my favourite songs, without the music, the lyrics would probably still be pretty good, but it wouldn't be the same. There's something about music that moves us – music is something that touches our soul – music is something that touches us so deep in our hearts. Kind of weird; doesn't really make sense - but there you go; music affects us in ways that we can't explain.

You might be thinking, 'Berni, why are you rabbiting on about music all of a sudden - we're talking about God healing our hearts?' Listen to what the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 19: *"Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."* Now it's one thing for someone else's music to make us feel good, but this is about us making music in our hearts - so not receiving something but giving something – *"Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."*

The point of what we have been talking about over these last few weeks is the fact that our hearts need healing because when they're sick, that robs us of life; it stunts our growth and that's why God wants to heal our hearts. Even when we've turned our backs on Him, in fact, especially then; when we are hurting; when we are living through the consequences of that rebellion. Listen to Jesus quoting Isaiah, Matthew chapter 13, verse 15:

*"For this people's heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their
eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with
their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would
heal them."*

And what happens when our hearts are healed is this: instead of being needy all the time; instead of always needing people to help us and support us; instead of being mostly a taker, we become mostly a giver. There's an overflow; an abundance; there's more than enough to share with others whose hearts in turn, need

healing. And nowhere is that more evident than when we are making music to our hearts to God.

I wonder if that isn't what worship is? See, these Christians go to church, mostly on Sundays and they sing songs and they worship God but you and I know that it's entirely possible to stand there and sing the songs and have your mind wandering on who's going to win the footy this afternoon. There's no worship happening there – the minds not even engaged, let alone the heart. But when our hearts have been healed by God, we just want to make music; we just want to because....because the Spirit of God gets a hold of our hearts and heals them and brings forgiveness and repentance and that turning back to God that we were talking about earlier, when we love God and seek Him and serve Him with all our hearts; when that's what's happening, let me tell you, we just want to make music in our hearts to God.

Can I ask you something today? Can I implore you? Don't settle for anything less! This is God's plan for you and for me so that even when we are going through the most severe trial, we can close our eyes and just know that we are full of the Spirit of God; God Himself; that we are loved; that we're safe and that, my friend, is where the joy of the Lord comes from. That's what makes us want to make music to the Lord, our God, in our hearts.

There was a time when David, before he became the King of Israel, was being hunted down, like an animal, and so David this day, was hiding in a cave. Later he writes a Psalm about that experience – listen carefully, it's so beautiful – Psalm 57:

*“Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful to me
for my soul takes refuge in you;
in the shadow of your wings I will take refuge,
until the destroying storm passes by.*

*I cry to the God Most High, to the God who fulfills his purpose
for me.
He will send from heaven and save me,
he will put to shame those who trample on me.
God will send forth his steadfast love and his faithfulness.*

*I lie down among lions that greedily devour human prey;
their teeth are spears and arrows, their tongues sharp as
swords.*

*Be exalted, O God, above the heavens. Let your glory be over
all the earth.*

*They set a net for my steps; my soul was bowed down.
They dug a pit in my path, but they have fallen into it
themselves.
My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast.
I will sing and make melody. Awake, my soul!
Awake, O harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.
I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the people;
I will sing praises to you among the nations.
For your steadfast love is as high as the heavens;
your faithfulness extends to the clouds."*

In the darkest hour of his life; his life is threatened; he's lying amongst the lions and yet he is singing the praises of God – why? "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody." His heart's steadfast; it's healed – it's resting in God; he's safe amidst the danger and threat and he just can't help himself. Does that mean that we should always expect to be on cloud nine? No, some days we will be in the cave but I want to encourage you, God wants us to have a healed and abundantly overflowing heart.

And you know what I have discovered? On those bad days, when sometimes the very last thing I feel like doing is worshipping God, I do it anyway, because in a strange kind of way; in a way that I can't quite explain, worshipping God, making music to Him in my heart, brings healing and peace and joy.

My friend, listen to me: God wants to heal your heart. Lay it out before Him; seek Him with all your heart; love Him with all your heart; serve Him with all your heart and He will, I promise you, He will come and heal it. It may take time, often it does, but little by little, that sickness inside us He calls 'sin' goes away and it's replaced by health and vitality and passion and desire to sacrifice and serve the Lord our God. It's like He gives us a new heart and when He does that, no matter what comes, we end up in our own way, saying like David, "My heart is steadfast, O God, my heart is steadfast. I will sing and make melody."