

*Teach me Your way, O LORD; I will walk in Your truth; Unite my heart to fear Your name.*  
Psalm 86:11 NLT

Ring almost any doorbell in America and you will no doubt find someone in the house that is struggling with inner conflict and tension. In the Bible you can find a verse that says:

*“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.*  
(Isaiah 26:3 NKJV)

Most of us really don't know what it is to live in that zone of life; the zone of perfect peace. To a certain extent we will have tension from time to time. We are made up of both body and spirit. Our bodies have certain drives such as hunger, fear and affection. The spirit has impulses as well like conscience, reverence and worship.

Maintaining the control of the spiritual on the one hand and the discipline of the physical on the other is not always easy. When the apostle Paul wrote:

*I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.* 1 Corinthians 9:27 NLT

He is strongly hinting that we will face tension when we try to do this.

There is also a constant conflict between good and evil. Every man and woman, especially Christians, becomes a center of resistance against all the forces of wrong that are in the world. It's a fact that we are going to live with some conflicts until we leave this earth.

In the text from Psalm 86, we hear the cry of a man that knows how unhappy, unhealthy and unfruitful the life that suffers from a divided heart is. A person with a divided heart is a person with a double mind; partly for Christ and partly for self. It is a person with a double will: partly surrendered and partly reserved. It is a person of double loyalty: partly to the Kingdom of God and partly to the Kingdom of this world.

When we live that way we please neither God nor ourselves.

So today we are going to talk about having a divided heart and what that means. We are going to try to figure out how to not have one and how to live God's way.

By the time we are done today I hope that many of us will make the Psalmists prayer our own.

*Unite my heart to fear Your name.*

### **1. Let's consider the condition of a divided heart. What a divided heart look like?**

When people talk to me about the surrender of their hearts it usually comes down to only a few things. It usually means saying yes to God instead of yes to ourselves.

The self that God wants to produce in us is a unified self so that the battle is not continually raging inside of you. It may not be a fully-grown up self because growth continues until the day we die, but it should be and can be a totally surrendered self.

It is a self from which all unworthy loyalties have been cleansed. It is a self that offers up all of the things that call for us to be unsundered as a sacrament of consecration to God. He goes on the throne of our heart instead of anything else.

Let me share a couple of things as illustrations so that we can understand what this looks like practically.

**Ambition:** There is an ambitious self that just will not wait humbly on God to reveal His plan for us. His plan defines success for us as He defines it not as we define it. Our ambition will claw its way to the top in a craving for human applause and approval but that is not God's way.

**Jealousy:** There is a jealous selfishness whose feelings are always right on the surface. Jealous people are always being hurt by the most unappreciative or slight. In fact when they see others have success they can't be happy about it at all. It's a miserable way to live.

**Anger:** There can be an angry self that should be arrested sometimes for "disturbing the peace." You know if you have those issues. You know if you have been angry with your family or your spouse or your coworkers to the point that they don't even like being around you. Anger can be a symptom of a divided heart and only the power of the Holy Spirit can help us internally to take away this most unwelcome character flaw. Nobody likes to be around an angry person.

**Self-pity:** There are people who wallow in self-pity. They are always on the wrong end of everything in their minds. Nothing is ever good about anything. They never utter anything positive and in fact thrive on pointing out the negative things about their life and how mistreated they are.

A pastor was once working on a sermon and a young man from his church was watching over his shoulder and saw the title: "Do We Really Want God's Control?" He blurted out to the pastor that the answer to that question was "no." He went on to point out the places that Christians often try to serve God and yet have their own way. He suggested things like: Giving in to the fear of people's opinions, taking things into our own hands so as to insure some personal ambition, being lazy about the disciplines of prayer and taking in the word of God which is what gives us our spiritual life. (They are like food and without them you will starve.)

When he was done thinking out loud the pastor made a profound statement: "All of us Christians must choose which pain we want to suffer; the pain of a crucified self, or the pain of a divided mind." A crucified self may take us through times of suffering and sorrow but ultimately leads to inexpressible joy because we have kept ourselves surrendered to God's will. The pain of a

divided heart will most often takes us down a trail of sorry to some precipice of collapse and demise.

## **2. Let's consider the consequences of a divided heart. What's it feel like?**

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There are two phrases in this scripture divided by two semi colons but they are followed by a colon which means we need to look a little further. This prayer is offered for a united heart so that the person praying might be taught God's way and that they will come to know God's truth.

So let's think about this for a few moments. What are the consequences? If you have a divided heart you will lack some things:

### **You will lack perception.**

It's all very well to pray, Lord teach me Your way, but unless you also pray, "unite my heart and bring this inner confusion to an end" the light will not break through. Sometimes we sing great songs of consecration and surrender at the top of our voices but at the bottom of our hearts are locked doors of reservation. And then we wonder why we can't seem to get any light from God on our problems.

Jesus said something both interesting and convicting in Matthew 6:22: *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*

I don't know of a more simple but profound statement by Jesus. If your eye is singly focused on pleasing God it's going to change a lot of things about what you do. If you really want God's will and not your own you must be willing to have your eye only on what He would want for you. You're not responsible for others but you are responsible for yourself. If you and I want God's Word to be meaningful in our lives we have to make sure our heart is not crossways with God's Word.

### **You will lack power.**

Some people walk for Christ and with Christ and others just wobble. The outer wobble of a life is the sign of an inner conflict and struggle. In the book of James we read that a double minded person is unstable in all their ways. You see sometimes we create filters in our life that screen out the ability of God to get into the places we are holding on our own.

I wonder what would happen if we applied the same standards of loyalty to our Christian activities that we expect from other areas of our lives?

If your car starts once every three tries, is it reliable? If the postman skipped delivery every Monday and Thursday, is he trustworthy? If you don't go to work once or twice a month, are you

a reliable employee? If your fridge stops working for a day or two every now and then, do you say, “Oh well, it work most of the time?” If your water heater provides an icy cold shower every now and then, is it dependable? If you skipped a couple of electricity bill payments do you think the electric company would mind? If you fail to worship God one or two Sundays a month, would you expect to be called a faithful Christian? If you only served God with about 50 percent of your life would you qualify as double minded? We expect loyalty and reliability from things and other people - isn't it reasonable then that God just might expect the same from us.

The only way we will enjoy God's power in our life is to figure out a way to not have a divided heart.

### **3. Let's consider the cure for a divided heart. How can I fix it?**

Let me ask you something that I really want you to be honest about. Would you really like to know that your heart is not divided and that it is really given to God completely? Do you have conflict in your soul that you would like to get rid of? Would you like to get rid of the confusion of mixed motives and a divided heart? If so we are going to look at three really simple steps. The youngest person in here can get these.

#### **Actions steps:**

##### **Confession**

When we stop avoiding the facts of whatever is going on in our inner life and being to call it for what it is we are well on our way to healing and uniting our heart. The most courageous hour in any person's life is the hour that they honestly face themselves. It's about honesty. You've looked God's way sure but you've also looked your own way. We often will go with God when it is not all that inconvenient but other times we may go our own way. Confession before God is a way to let the cleanup begin. You have to want it. You have to want God to be first but if you do confession it is the wonderful first step. You don't have to confess to a man or a priest or anyone else but God will hear your confession.

##### **Call on God**

It sounds so simple doesn't it? And yet that is what David did in this Psalm. He prayed, “Unite by heart to fear Your name.”

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. “They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope. <sup>12</sup> In those days when you pray, I will listen. <sup>13</sup> If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.”* Jeremiah 29:11-13 NLT

For every step you take toward God the Bible says He will draw closer to you. You have to move in His direction and never stop. If you can't walk toward Him just lean toward Him. If your faith is weak pray and ask Him for even more faith. (Lord, Help my unbelief.)

Scholars tell us that the Hebrew word for “unite” means to “make one.” Its root word means one but it never means alone. It is always about being a unit or a fusion of togetherness. Now let me tell you that our human hearts or souls, the innermost part of our being, is only capable of blending with God. We are made for communion and harmony with Him.

He became our Savior so that He might restore us and put us in harmony with God. We have all tried our own way but in the end turning back to Jesus is the only way that will work. Can you live without God on this earth? Sure, lots of people do it. But you will never live as God intended with His blessing unless you call on Him and then there is one more step.

### **Commit yourself to God**

Our faith needs an anchor. When you search the word of God you find this to be true. Listen to this verse:

*But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.* 1 John 1:9 NLT

If you confess, God will be faithful to forgive you. What an amazing promise that sometimes we need. And God promises to cleanse us from everything we’ve done. You see sometimes we get in some pretty bad spots. You might think there is no hope for you but God has always offered hope to those that turn to Him.

Scott Plumber told his story in a sermon. The day I turned 18, I left home. I had saved some money, and despite my parents' strong objections, I packed a few things in my Volkswagen and headed for California. Just outside of Needles, California, a man at a rest stop pulled a gun, took my wallet, and drove off with my car. I had not been in the state more than 15 minutes, and I was broke and on foot. I made a report to the California Highway Patrol, but the officer said there was little chance I would ever see my car or my stuff again. As a final warning he said, "It's against the law to hitchhike on the interstate." I walked to a truck stop and finally convinced a driver to give me a ride to Los Angeles. The driver listened to my story, and then as he let me out, he gave me a \$20 bill.

I walked 32 blocks to the beach. I was thrilled to see the waves beat up on Will Rogers Beach. It was more beautiful than I had ever imagined. I sat there in the bright day, and considered what to do. As the sun began to set, I spent part of my \$20 for something to eat. Determined to get a fresh start in the morning, I slept that night in a park where I could hear the pounding surf.

The next few weeks were not pleasant. Within a few days, I was dirty and reduced to asking strangers for money. For two months I slept wherever I could. I searched behind restaurants and grocery stores for food. One day I spent a precious dollar on a picture postcard to send to the folks. "Having a great time. Found a good job, and have rented an apartment near the beach," I wrote. All lies, but I was too embarrassed to tell my folks of my situation.

I got into a routine. Every morning I would walk down Santa Monica Boulevard and hold out my hand and ask everyone I passed, "Do you have any extra change?" One day, a lady gave me a dollar. I quickly stuck it into my pocket, and approached the next person coming down the street. I stuck out my hand and looked at him, -- but didn't say anything. I couldn't. I stood there in shocked silence. I was staring at my own father. I was instantly embarrassed, and then I realized he didn't recognize me. As he fumbled for some change, I realized that I had lost a lot of weight, and behind the beard and dirty clothes, he could have easily passed me by.

Then without really thinking about it, I said, "Dad! It's me. Scotty." Tears came instantly to both our eyes. He stood there in silence for a few moments; then said, "Son, I've been looking for you." Despite the filth and the smell, he hugged me close to himself.

To shorten a long story, within 24 hours I was clean, shaven, wearing new clothes, and on a plane heading for Nebraska. I was sitting beside my dad, and I was going home. I feel very good knowing that once he had received my postcard, he came looking for me.

I was not really like the boy in the Prodigal Son parable. I just wanted to make my own way in the world. I was not really a bad kid; I just got into a lot of trouble because of my naive, youthful outlook on life. And then I stayed in trouble, because my pride will not let me ask my folks for help.

Well, that was years ago. Both my mom and dad have passed away now. In fact I live in their house, the one I left so long ago. I realize now just how young and foolish I was back then, but I'll tell you something that is a lot more foolish than that. That day in Santa Monica, all I had asked from my dad was "any spare change." Yet he would have willingly given me all he had. I asked so little from him that day because (at first) I didn't know who he was. We often ask so little from God, because we really do not know him. We ask him for a bauble here or a trinket there, yet all He has is ours if we will only ask. We project our limited love toward God, and assume His love is limited towards us. But "He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us, will He not also graciously give us everything we ask?" (Romans 8 32 - Montgomery NT). (From a sermon by N. D. "Scotty" Plummer)

God is waiting for you today. All you have to do is turn and head His direction.