

Foundations of the Spiritual life (2) continued

The Heart

The work of the Holy Spirit

'I have inclined my heart to perform Your statutes forever, to the very end'
(Psalm 119: 112).

'Hear, my son, and be wise; and guide your heart in the way' (Proverbs 23: 19).

The heart is a central part in man's life. It is the spirit of the person, the inner and deep direction of man: *'the inward thought and the heart of man are deep'* (Psalm 64: 6).

The heart is the most important part of man because God's eyes look at man's heart¹ searching its direction and inclinations.

If one is not paying attention to his heart, he can be praying, worshipping and ministering and then all of a sudden he finds that he is estranged from God. This is because earlier on this person's heart was taking a wrong direction and inclination whilst he was not aware or paying attention; and then all of a sudden one realises that he is in this wrong road or direction. This is similar to someone driving a car and then took a wrong turn. As a result, he finds himself in a different road or direction.

Therefore it is important to pay attention to the movement of the heart and its different reactions in different situations. It is important to watch over the heart in general and make sure that it is undivided and that one has 'a

¹ 1 Samuel 16:7

loyal heart and with a willing mind, as we have read earlier in 1Chronicals 28: 9 when David was passing on his experience to his Son Solomon at the end of his life. This is the first point about the heart which we discussed earlier.

Today, I want to focus on the verses we read at the opening of our talk which are two examples of numerous verses in the book of Psalms and Proverbs where we read the phrase: *'incline your heart'*. *Inclining my heart* means *giving it a direction*.

One is responsible to realise and discern the direction of his heart; and then determine which direction his heart should take. In other words, one needs first to know where his heart is and which direction it is taking. When one discerns the direction of his heart, he then needs to deal with his heart and specify for it the direction it should take. For example, I would tell my heart: *'How long will you falter between two opinions? (1Kings 18: 21) O, my heart, you cannot be heading in different directions; take one direction; choose the direction you will take'*.

If we fail to do so now with our hearts, two or three years later we will find ourselves estranged from God. We would then wonder why we became lukewarm all of sudden. In fact, it was not all of a sudden; early on, the heart made a slight deviation and had a different inclination, but we did not pay attention to it.

In our relationship with God, we need to learn to observe our heart and incline it and direct it in the way of God's commandments.

This can be done by praying and asking God's help to reveal and expose our heart and correct it, as the Psalmist prayed saying: *'Search me, O God, and*

know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting' (Psalm 139: 23, 24).

It is the person's responsibility to come before the Lord in prayer saying: *'Lord, it is written about You that You search the hearts (Jeremiah 17: 10); please, help me to see my heart and what You find in it.'*

This is similar to a test that is done in a laboratory; God also tests the heart.

In Deuteronomy 8, we read that God tested the heart of the people, the children of Israel, to let them know that they have wrong inclinations and wrong directions in their hearts. This wrong direction made the people die in the wilderness and not enter the Land of promise. In 1 Corinthians 10: 5, it is written about them: *'but God was not pleased with the majority of them'*.

We need to get to know the Person of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter. He is the Person of the Trinity who comes to us to dwell in us and become our companion, the Paraclete, who walks side to side by us.

The more we pay attention to Him, the more He reveals Himself to us in a deeper way. After that, it will not matter where we are; whether we are together in a retreat or a spiritual day or in any other place; the place is not what makes the difference; the place does not make the day good or the spirit fervent; what makes a difference is the Spirit, the Comforter. When He draws near us, He makes a great difference in the atmosphere; His presence amongst us stirs our hearts.

Therefore, exactly as I was saying that it is important to pay attention to our hearts and incline it in the right direction, we also need to be careful not to quench or grieve the Holy Spirit.

We have all experienced that at times we can be fervent in the spirit and then we do something or say something and then find that we are quenched.

We should not grieve the Holy Spirit in each one of us and also in our midst. We are a family of ministers; we have been together for a while and have served the Lord together. When the Holy Spirit sees a group of people like this, He desires to make them a spiritual family, one household, one net.

Therefore, we need to be aware that the Person of the Holy Spirit is in our midst; and so we need to be watchful, avoiding the things that grieve Him and doing the things that please Him. For example, it is important to love one another, be sensitive to one another and be gentle with one another; and be watchful in our relationship with one another². It is also important to submit to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5: 21); respect the older and love the younger.

If the Holy Spirit is grieved in our midst, we are the losers. He is the One who blesses our ministry. He is the One who draws near us and works in us and through us. If we grieve Him, we will sense that something is lost and is missing. We will continue to pray and worship; but something will be missing because He was grieved.

Therefore, it is important to pay attention not to grieve the Spirit, but learn to watch our heart in our relationship with God and our relationship with one another.

² Colossians 3:12 – 15