

Obeying From The Heart

Stability in Mind, Heart, and Will

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Given 24-May-08; Sermon #883

When a man or woman does something extraordinary—something that accomplishes a feat against all odds—something that uses effort beyond the skill or capability of the person—it is often said that he "has heart."

About twenty years ago, a movie came out, about a boy during the early part of the twentieth century, whose name was Will Stoneman. His father died, and he was left alone to care for his mother and their land. Needing money to maintain it, at the age of seventeen, he decided to join a cross-country dog sled race across Canada, against experienced antagonists from around the world and against the harsh natural elements. A reporter wrote this about him: "Once in a generation, an athlete pits himself against such overwhelming odds that even the most jaded spectator finds himself cheering breathlessly." For this extraordinary accomplishment, Will Stoneman was given the nickname "Iron Will." He was definitely a man that had "heart"!

There have been others about whom it has been said that they had "heart" to be able to accomplish amazing things in their lives: winners of the Olympic Triathlon, climbers of Mt. Everest, soldiers of extraordinary courage, to name a few. We in God's church have to have heart, if we are going to make it into God's Kingdom, and God is going to give us the heart to do just that.

The word *heart* is often used in reference to such things as personality and intellect, memory, emotions, desires, and will. The heart is used metaphorically to describe the intangibles that constitute what it means to be human. In this sense, biblically, it is the antonym of the "flesh" or "body." We see this in the psalmist's confession:

Psalms 73:26 My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

To use a modern idiom, the heart is often used in the Bible to describe "what makes us tick"—that is, human personality. In other words, the heart is used to describe the dynamic forces that make us unique individuals. As a result, the heart can be instilled with moral qualities.

In this regard, we also find complex metaphors concerning the heart among the writers

of the Bible. For example, a heart not yet bound to God is referred to as an "uncircumcised heart." On the other hand, hearts can be transformed from self-serving to God-fearing. Ezekiel describes the process as transforming hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. He also refers to this transformation as receiving a "new heart."

It is because the heart stands for human personality that God looks there in addition to our actions to see whether we are faithful. Because we are called upon to seek God with all our heart, that is where He looks to see if we are His people.

I Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the LORD does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

Obviously, our heart is something that is very important in telling God where we stand in regard to Him.

Our personality is a function of many different aspects of our being, including our thinking, remembering, feeling, desiring, and willing. It is not surprising that the Hebrew word for *heart* is used as a representation of these, as well. Today, we associate thought and memory with the brain; but in the phrasing of the Bible, thinking is a function of the heart. As a prelude to the flood, the book of Genesis tells us that God was very familiar with "how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time."

When the Bible reports internal dialogue, whether silent prayer to God or simply thought, it uses the phrase *in the heart*. For instance, Hannah prayed to God "in her heart"; and throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, the teacher's mental processes are reported as something he said "in his heart." As Mary witnessed all of the wonderful things that happened around the time of the birth of Jesus, she "pondered them in her heart."

Today we live in a world that is driven by emotion. The instability that has resulted from this misdirected or visionless heart of emotion is widespread and devastating. Depression and discouragement are often the result of this unstable human power, but it does not have to be that way.

According to biblical usage, the heart is the source from which the emotions flow. Aaron's heart flowed with joy when he saw Moses. Leviticus 19:17 warns God's people

not to hate their brother in their heart. Fear is expressed as a loss of heart, indicating that courage is also a heartfelt emotion. These and many other emotions—for instance, despair, sadness, trust, and anger—are said to come from one's heart.

The heart is referred to as the seat of desire, as well. Abner asked David if he could set things in motion for the king, so that David could rule over all that his heart desired. The psalmist tells his hearers to turn to God so that He can give them the desires of their heart.

(I am just showing you the different ways that *heart* is used in the Bible, and the way that we refer to it quite often in our everyday lives.)

The heart not only thinks, feels, remembers, and desires, but it also chooses a course of action. In Matthew 15:19, Jesus taught that "out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander." The obstinacy of the human heart is also an act of will. For example, there are the many references in the book of Exodus to the "hard heart" of Pharaoh. His was a heart that refused to choose in accordance with God's will, which led ultimately to Egypt's destruction. On the positive side, the Bible talks about a heart that prompts a person to give a gift to the Lord. It speaks of the "integrity" of a person's heart and of a "discerning" heart.

Maybe the most extraordinary use of *heart* in the Bible is in reference to God.

Genesis 8:20-21 Then Noah built an altar to the LORD, and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a soothing aroma. Then the LORD said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground for man's sake, although the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; nor will I again destroy every living thing as I have done."

The reference in verse 21 to God's heart is similar to what is applied to humans in the same verse and is a reminder that we are created in the image of God. God is a personal Being who thinks, feels, desires, and chooses. One of the most intriguing passages in this connection is found in Hosea 11. The prophet Hosea quotes God as saying that, while He will certainly punish Israel for their rebellion, He will not completely destroy them. The decision to refrain from their destruction was not done lightly; it was the result of God's careful contemplation.

Hosea 11:8-9 "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over,

Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I set you like Zeboiim? My heart churns within Me; My sympathy is stirred. I will not execute the fierceness of My anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim. For I am God, and not man, the Holy One in your midst; and I will not come with terror."

We see that, when God contemplates something, He moves in certain directions in His own heart, as a metaphor, no doubt. Here, God justifies His change of mind on the basis of His holiness. In contrast, when human beings are angered, they are naturally inclined toward a course of destruction toward those who offend. However, because God is divine, not human, His mercy prevails.

With that background to the heart in mind, I would like to look closely at something the apostle Paul wrote to the members in Rome—and, of course, to us today—that expresses its importance to God. Paul complimented the Roman members on genuinely obeying and living by God's truth as delivered by the patriarchs, the prophets, Jesus Christ, and the apostles.

Romans 6:16-22 Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I speak in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.

The pivotal scripture here is the last half of verse 17: "yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." *Form of doctrine* can also be expressed as *standard of teaching*; both mean the same thing.

There can be many symptoms or manifestations of the spiritual condition of depression. Ignorance of the problem in and of itself may lead to the condition. The kind of person

who thinks that, once you believe on Jesus Christ, all your problems are left behind and that the rest of the story will be "they all live happily ever after" is certain sooner or later to suffer from this spiritual depression.

We are brought into this spiritual life, this spiritual condition by the grace of God—but we must never forget that against us is another power. We are citizens of the Kingdom of God, but the Bible tells us that we are opposed by another kingdom, which is also a spiritual kingdom, from which we are continually and ruthlessly being attacked and besieged.

We are in the fight of faith, and we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against supernatural powers and spiritual wickedness. While that is true, we have to be prepared to resist spiritual depression and discouragement. We have to be prepared for its manifestation in all kinds of ways. There is nothing that so characterizes all the activities of Satan as his subtlety. He is not only an able and powerful being, but he is also subtle; and he can transform himself into an angel of light, if necessary. The one thing he desires to do is to ruin and destroy the work of God, and there is no work of God that he is more anxious to destroy than God's plan of salvation for mankind. Therefore, from the moment we become Christian, we become the special object of Satan's evil attention. That is why James says,

James 1:2 My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

We are to rejoice because it is a proof of our faith. The moment we are called by God into His truth, Satan is especially interested in getting us down. He has no more successful way of doing that than to make us miserable or to make us suffer from spiritual depression.

We cannot allow ourselves to be like malnourished children, not growing, not exhibiting health and energy. Any Christian in that condition is more or less in denial of his own faith, and Satan is pleased. For that reason, he is especially concerned to produce this condition in us. There is no end to the ways that may affect us and the ways that it may show itself in us.

Let us look at another general cause of this condition:

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

This is a positive description of a Christian, but we can use it from a negative viewpoint to gain another perspective. The absence of conformity to obeying from the heart is one of the common causes of all spiritual depression.

Paul gives the Romans and all of us an absolute description of a Christian. He says that we were the servants of Satan and under the dominion of Satan, but we are no longer in that position. He gives the reason as, "You have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you." This is what God demanded from His congregation in the wilderness (the ancient Israelites), and it is what He demands from His church (the spiritual Israelites).

Deuteronomy 30:1-10 "God will gather you, and from there He will bring you. "Then the LOORD your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the LOORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LOORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live. Also the LOORD your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the LOORD and do all His commandments which I command you today. The LOORD your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, in the increase of your livestock, and in the produce of your land for good. For the LOORD will again rejoice over you for good as He rejoiced over your fathers, if you obey the voice of the LOORD your God, to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this Book of the Law, and if you turn to the LOORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

There is God's view of spiritual stability: "with all your heart and with all your soul." (*Heart* here means mind, and *soul* means body.) This relates to the entirety, the fullness of a person's life.

In Romans 6, Paul emphasizes to the Roman members the importance of understanding the stability that comes from the truth and of understanding the inevitable consequences that come from misunderstanding.

Romans 6:14-15 For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace. What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!

The point that the apostle Paul emphasized is the wholeness, the stability of a Christian's life. It is a life in which one has to obey (there is the will) from the heart (there is the emotion, the sensibility) the form of doctrine that came to the mind and to the understanding. Paul is, in describing a Christian, emphasizing that there is a wholeness about his life. The whole person is involved—the mind, the heart, and the will—and a common cause of spiritual depression is the failure to realize that a Christian's life is a whole life, a stable life.

Lack of stability is one of the most prolific causes of trouble and conflict and unrest in the life of a Christian. The cause of some of this lack of stability can often be laid at the feet of the leadership. I am talking about leadership in general; it could be in a church or in a business, but the principles are still the same.

Lop-sided Christians can be produced by churches whose doctrine lacks stability, wholeness, or completeness. Children generally share the characteristics of their parents, and converts to God's truth tend to take on certain characteristics of the ones who were used by God in their conversion. Not only that, the kind of meeting to which people are initially introduced and in which they continue (whether "formal" or "informal") has an impact. In fact, all the circumstances of a person's conversion tend to influence his subsequent history more than we realize.

This partly explains the existence of different church groups or congregations showing certain unique characteristics. Often these characteristics are extremes. For example, a congregation could be syrupy or cold. They could be entirely one way or another, grace or law. The emphasis could be entirely on prophecy or history; it could be dealing with only mercy or sacrifice, and so on.

All the members of any one group are very much alike and have a certain stamp on them while others are different. The extent to which this is true—the extent to which we have these unique characteristics associated with a specific type of ministry—is the extent to which people are likely to be victims of this lack of stability that ultimately will manifest itself in unhappiness and misery. We actually see that in some of the groups that are out there, instances in which a group may be dealing with just prophecy and people leave because it is only a part of God's truth; and it needs the rest to guide and monitor it.

The apostle Paul mentions this to the Roman members because it always raises a practical problem. We cannot be sure whether he imagined this position in order to refute it or whether it actually manifested itself in Rome. It may be that people were

actually saying, "Shall we then continue in sin that grace may abound?" or maybe this is a rhetorical question. It may be the case that Paul, having established this doctrine of justification by faith, suddenly says to himself, "There is a danger in leaving it like that; I need to qualify what I have just said. 'Therefore, will we continue in sin that grace may abound?'" He had been saying that "where sin abounded grace abounded much more." There were people in the early church that did argue like that, and there are still some who tend to do the same thing—if not in word, then in action.

The danger is believing that no matter what we do, we will be covered by grace. It does matter! What does Paul say to that? His answer is that we can only say a thing like that if we do not understand the teaching. If we understand the teaching, we would not make such silly deductions.

He answers, "God forbid. You who are dead to sin can no longer live in sin." Because we are now "in Christ," we have not only died with Him, but we will also be raised to join Him. Here in chapter 6, Paul shows the importance of understanding the stability of truth, the importance of taking hold of the whole gospel and of seeing that, in understanding it truly, there are inevitable consequences.

There are certain principles enunciated here. The first is that spiritual depression or unhappiness in a Christian's life is often caused by our failure to realize the greatness of the truth of God. When Paul talks about "the form of doctrine delivered to you," he refers to the "standard of teaching." People are often unhappy in the Christian life because Christianity and the whole of the gospel are seen in inadequate terms.

People in this mental state are quick to move from valuing true doctrine from the inspired scriptures to valuing the traditions of men. In their minds, philosophical tradition supersedes spiritual doctrine because tradition is easier. They become Sabbath-breakers first, and that leads to other sins.

Some think that the gospel is merely a message of forgiveness, as mainstream Christianity believes. If you ask them to tell you what Christianity is, they will reply, "If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven," and they stop at that. They are unhappy about certain things in their past and they hear that God in Christ will forgive them. They take their forgiveness and they stop, and that is the whole of their unstable Christianity.

There are others who conceive of it as morality only. Their view of themselves is that they do not need forgiveness, but they desire an exalted way of life. They want to do good in this world, and Christianity, to them, is an ethical, moral program. People like

this are bound to be unhappy. Certain problems will inevitably arise in their lives which are strictly outside morality: someone's death, some personal relationship problem. Morality and ethics will not help at that point, and what they believe to be God's truth is useless to them in that situation. They are unhappy when the blow comes, because they have never had an adequate view of God's truth. They have had a partial view; they have simply seen one aspect.

There are others who are interested in it simply as something good and beautiful. It makes a great aesthetic appeal to them, and they feel better when they hear it. There was a secretary where I worked about twenty-five years ago who converted to Catholicism. Since her new husband was Catholic, she thought, "Why not give it a try?" When I asked her why she had converted, she replied, "Well, it is just a beautiful religion; everything is so beautiful. You go to the church, and there is all that pomp and circumstance." I said, "But it is in Latin." She responded, "It doesn't matter; it just feels so religious." This is the way a lot of people in the world think of it.

I am comparing all these incomplete and partial views to what the apostle Paul refers to in chapter 6 as "the form of doctrine," "the standard of teaching," the great truth that he elaborates in this epistle to the Romans. God's inspired written word is not something partial and piecemeal; it takes in the whole life, the whole of history, the whole world. It tells us about the Creation and the final judgment and everything in between. It is a complete, whole view of life, and many are unhappy in the Christian life because they have never realized that this way of life caters to the whole of people's lives and covers every eventuality in our experience. There is no aspect of life but that the inspired written word of God has something to say about it.

The whole of life must come under its influence because it is all-inclusive; God's truth is meant to control and govern everything in our lives. If we do not realize that, we are certain, sooner or later, to find ourselves in an unhappy, depressed, and discouraged condition. So many, because they indulge in these harmful and unscriptural dichotomies and only apply their Christianity to certain aspects of their lives, are bound to be in trouble.

That is the first thing we see here. We have to realize the greatness of God's truth, its vast eternal effect. It is all worked out and put into its great context and should direct the whole of our life.

That brings us to the second point, which is that in the same way as we often fail to realize the greatness and the wholeness of the message, we also fail to realize that the whole person also has to be involved in it and by it. "You have obeyed from the heart

the form of doctrine delivered to you."

A human being is a wonderfully designed creature: he is mind; he is heart; and he is will. Those are the three main constituents of a human being. God has given us a mind, He has given us a heart, and He has given us a will so that we can act. Of course, there is the spirit in man that makes these things work the way that God designed.

One of the greatest benefits of God's truth is that it takes into consideration the whole person. There is nothing else that does that; it is only this complete truth, this complete view of life and death and eternity that is thorough enough to include the whole person. Since we often fail to realize that, it is inevitable that we, as human beings, have so many problems. We are often partial in our response to God's truth, but God wants a complete response! Let me very quickly read seven passages that express God's attitude on what our response should be.

Deuteronomy 6:5-9 "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

Deuteronomy 10:12 "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Deuteronomy 26:16 "This day the Lord your God commands you to observe these statutes and judgments; therefore you shall be careful to observe them with all your heart and with all your soul."

We read Deuteronomy 30:1-10 earlier. Later, Joshua repeated the same thing to the Israelites:

Joshua 22:5 "But take careful heed to do the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the Lord commanded you, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to keep His commandments, to hold fast to Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."

I Samuel 12:20-24 Then Samuel said to the people, "Do not fear. You have done all this wickedness; yet do not turn aside from following the Lord, but serve the Lord with all your heart. And do not turn aside; for then you would go after empty things which cannot profit or deliver, for they are nothing. For the Lord will not forsake His people, for His great name's sake, because it has pleased the Lord to make you His people. Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way. Only fear the Lord, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you."

For *truth* in the last sentence, we could substitute *the doctrine once delivered*. It is interesting to note that, in verse 22, he says that ceasing to pray for one another is a sin.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.

It is interesting to see how many times this is emphasized. If God repeats something, we had better take heed.

Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

What does it mean realistically to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind"? From where does the understanding for such things come? The world certainly does not understand that. Two rhetorical questions from God answer the latter question:

Job 38:36 "Who has put wisdom in the mind? Or who has given understanding to the heart?"

Of course, it is God.

We will take a look at some details that should substantiate that we are often partial in our response to God's truth and that we do not give it our all. Today, we associate the head with the brain and the brain with the mind. The head and the brain provide us with a number of images of the mind and its functions. In the Bible, however, there is no mention of the brain as the center of consciousness, thought, or will. In the Greek New Testament, *mind* (*nous*) usually is used in reference to the cognitive, rational, and purposeful aspects of a person, as well as the less concrete aspects, such as opinion, understanding, or reflection.

The human mind is subject to troubling thoughts and confusion, but a mind that steadfastly trusts in God will experience perfect peace and stability. From Paul's perspective in Romans 1:26-32, it is as if the mind that is resistant to the knowledge of God is subjected to a spiritual disease. Ultimately, God gives over such minds to the full effects or penalties of sin of an immoral or worthless mind that engages in perverse behavior.

Romans 1:28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

Even those who endeavor to keep God's ways find themselves involved in a struggle. The only solution to this struggle is found in Jesus Christ, the true image of God, who, through the Spirit, brings deliverance from the fleshly mind of death and creates a mind of life and peace. This is a transformation that Paul refers to as the "renewing of the mind" or having "the mind of Christ." Those who have experienced this transformation can be called on to be perfectly united in mind and thought.

I Corinthians 1:10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

The first question that comes here is, "How in the world can people be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment?"

There are some people in whose case only the head seems to be in use—and only that part of the mind that deals with the intellect. Their approach and attitude shows us that

they are tremendously interested in scripture as a point of view, as a Christian philosophy. Without realizing it, to them, it is something purely philosophical, something entirely intellectual. To these people, Christianity is a matter of tremendous interest; and they believe and proclaim that if only this Christian point of view could be applied in politics, in industry, and in every other circle, all our troubles would be solved. They argue about it and discuss it with an obsession. It is their intellectual hobby and their scholarly interest, but the tragedy is that it stops at that interest; they are not careful to observe and keep it with all their heart and with all their soul.

Not only is there, quite often, an absence of kindness and compassion (they argue and contend about certain philosophies), but they also are often hard men to approach. People do not go to them if they are in trouble; people feel that they would neither understand nor sympathize. There have been some men who have been heads of groups that have said, "I do not want to pastor a congregation; I just want to do research." That is the type of individual that is not approachable when a person is in need.

Still worse, the truth in which they are so interested is not applied in their lives; it is something confined to their studies. It does not affect their conduct or behavior but is confined entirely to the mind. Obviously, they are bound, sooner or later, to get into trouble and to become unhappy. That is the result of the intellectual efforts of the religious hobbyist.

On the other hand, there are those whose religion seems to affect only the heart. By *heart*, I primarily mean the emotions, but there are other aspects as well. Because of their partial approach to trying to have a relationship with God, they actually have an irregular spiritual heartbeat, one that sporadically misses a beat. This is actually very common today. These are people who feel that they have had an emotional release, that they have passed through an emotional crisis.

I do not want to criticize this, but there is a real danger in having only a purely emotional experience. These are people who may have some real problem in their lives. They may have committed some specific sin. They have tried to forget, but they cannot get away from it in the long run. Finally, they hear a message that seems to give them deliverance from that one thing; they accept it; and things are well with them—but they stop at that. They have had an emotional experience and nothing else.

Some people are simply moved by the attractiveness of the presentation of God's truth, by the atmosphere of the church, the hymns that are sung, the sermonette, or the sermon—any or all of these things. Life has been hard and cruel to them, and they have

been embittered by circumstances. Then they go to a service, and somehow they find themselves comforted and soothed and feel happy and contented. They have received it all they want. Although they may go away feeling happy, they have no intention of changing anything in their lives.

Soon after, they find themselves in a predicament and in a position where that will not help them. One day, they will have to face some crisis and see it through, but they have never learned to think things through. They have been content to live on their feelings. Feelings are unstable; they go up and down when the person is basing everything on emotion. This is why children cannot make important decisions on their own, because children are driven by emotion. It is not until the age of 21 that they are actually becoming balanced enough to use both logic and emotion, and that has been scientifically proven.

It is inevitable that such people will at some time or other find themselves in trouble. Eventually, they always become unhappy and miserable. With that comes depression and discouragement. These are people that have something in the heart, but their head is not engaged at all and, often, neither is their will. They are content to go on enjoying themselves emotionally and experience feelings and are not concerned about the application of truth to the mind and to the will.

Then, you have the same thing in those whose will alone is involved. It is possible for people to be persuaded to take up Christianity. They say that they believe that it is a good life, and they solemnly decide to try it out—but "a person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still." In a sense, there is a real risk in bombarding people with God's truth when they have not been called. Great pressure applied to people's will always causes some wills to respond. They will decide because they have been called on to decide, because they have been told that they must decide, and they do decide.

Granted, the church is obligated to preach the gospel, and it falls on the ears of the called or uncalled. They do not always know why they decided as they did, though, and later on they will begin to ask the questions that they should have answered before they decided to commit to God's way of life.

To summarize this point: These are the people who decide to take up Christianity instead of being truly called and lead by Christ. They have never known this feeling of constraint, this feeling of obligation to the Father and His Son for their sacrifice and love. The truth has never meant that much to them. They did not do it with all of their heart, mind, body, and strength.

This gives us an idea of the condition. Sometimes you will find people who have only one part of their personality engaged—only the head, only the heart, or only the will. I think we can agree that they must be wrong, because God is not interested in a partial response to His call but an all-out response of the heart, the mind, and the will. It is also equally wrong to have only the head and the heart without the will, or the heart and the will without the head. That seems to be the thing that the apostle Paul is impressing on us in Romans 6.

The true Christian position, the stable position, is three-fold. It is the three together; the three at the same time; and the three always. The great spiritual truth of God takes up the whole person; and if the whole person is not taken up, think again as to where you stand.

Paul says to the Romans, in verse 17 of chapter 6, "...yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." God's truth is a way of life, and it should satisfy a person's mind completely. It can move his heart entirely, and it can lead to wholehearted obedience in the realm of the will.

Christ died so we can be completed in God's plan of salvation for mankind. It is not a matter of only parts of us being saved so we can be lop-sided Christians, but that there may be a completely stable finality about us. Not only that, if we lack this proportion, we will be in trouble later, because people have been made by God for the purpose of becoming perfect. What, though, does *perfect* or *perfection* mean?

The words *perfection* and *perfect* are the rendering of several Hebrew and Greek words. The fundamental idea is that of completeness. Absolute perfection is an attribute of God alone. In the highest sense, He alone is complete or in need of no improvement. His perfection is eternal and without defect. It is the ground and standard of all other perfection.

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

We all know, as members of God's church, that we have our work cut out for us, working with the power of God's Holy Spirit to be transformed into a perfect individual.

A relative perfection is also ascribed to God's works. It is also either ascribed to human beings or required of us. By this is meant complete conformity to requirements of character and conduct that God has appointed. Of course, this includes the government

of God, which takes the present human, deficient condition into account.

When the term *perfection* is applied to the Christian's present moral life, it is understood that Christians may be perfect even in this life in the lesser sense of being complete in reference to a lesser goal or a preliminary standard, although we still must wait for perfection in a larger sense with respect to eternal life. This important sense in which the Bible presents the Christian's present perfection, or completion, relates to our position in union with Christ by the indwelling of His Spirit.

Colossians 2:8-10 Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power.

In the Greek New Testament, there are two main words translated into the word *perfect*. One is *teleioo*, and the other is *katartizo*, with other variations. These, in many cases, are translated into the word *perfect* or *perfection*.

The verb *teleioo* refers to the act of bringing the person or thing to full-growth, maturity, workability, soundness, and completeness. When applied directly to a Christian, the word refers to one who is spiritually mature, complete, well-rounded in his Christian character. This Greek word, *teleioo*, and its variations occur in the New Testament scriptures as *performance*, *of full age*, *finisher*, *to the end*, *finish*, and *fulfilled*.

Another word from which *perfect* is translated is the verb *katartizo* meaning "to repair; to restore to a former good condition; to prepare; to fit out; to equip." It was used concerning reconciling factions, setting broken bones, putting a dislocated limb into place, and mending nets. Paul used it metaphorically in the sense of setting a person right, of bringing him into line. When specifically referring to a Christian, it concerned his equipping for Christian service.

Ephesians 4:11-13 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

The verb *katartizo* occurs in the New Testament as *mending, fitted, perfectly joined together, restore, prepared, framed, equipping*.

In contrasting these two words, we would say that *teleios* refers to Christian experience; *katartizo*, to Christian service. *Teleios* indicates maturity and completeness of Christian character; *katartizo*, equipping for service.

Now let us get back to the three powers that God has put in us: the mind, the heart, and the will. These powers are so strong, that you would think that it would be impossible for the three to co-exist in one person, but God is working to make us perfect.

Galatians 3:3-6 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?— just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

God is working to make us perfect through the hearing of faith and the doing of all His will. To what is our perfection and completion related?

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a bondservant of Christ, greets you, always laboring fervently for you in prayers, that you may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

There is another reference to laboring fervently in prayers. This is something that we should be doing that actually has an impact on a person's standing perfect and complete in all the will of God. It is God who does it, but we can certainly beseech God to do it for one another.

The object of the process of salvation is to bring us to that perfection, to be so conformed to His image that the effects and traces of sin will be removed and destroyed. We are in the process of this; we will not be fully perfect, in the larger sense, until we are changed into spirit.

These things must always come in the right order. There is a definite order to the way that Paul presents our pivotal scripture:

Romans 6:17 But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.

These people were slaves held by sin, and they are no longer that. Why not? Paul says that the form of doctrine came to them and they grasped it: "...you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered." They were in spiritual slavery. What brought them out? The truth was presented to them. They were not simply moved emotionally in the realm of the heart; it was not merely an appeal to the will. No, the truth was presented first.

These things have to be put in the right order, and it is the truth first. It is doctrine first; it is the standard of teaching first; it is the standard of righteousness first; it is the message of the gospel first. God may put it in a person's mind to know the truth, but the truth has to be available for a person to know where to start.

God's ministers are not concerned with simply attracting people emotionally or in the realm of the will; we are concerned with preaching the Word. The apostles were not sent out simply to change people. They were sent to "preach the gospel" of the coming Kingdom of God, and they were sent to "preach the truth" and "this form of doctrine."

We should know why we are Christians. We are not a people who simply say that something wonderful has happened to us. We are ready and able "to give a reason for the hope" that is in us. If we cannot, we had better shore up our unstable, lop-sided standing. The true Christian knows why he is, what he is, and where he stands. He has had doctrine presented to him, and he has received the truth. This "form of sound teaching" has come to his mind, to the understanding enlightened by the Holy Spirit. Then having seen the truth, the Christian loves it. It moves his heart. He sees what he was; he sees the life he was living; and he hates that past life.

If we see the truth about ourselves as having been slaves of sin, we will hate ourselves. We see the glorious truth about the love of God, and we want it; we desire it. Our heart is engaged to truly see this; we are moved by it; and we love it. We cannot help it. If we see truth clearly, we must feel it. That, in turn, leads to this: that our greatest desire is to practice it and to live it.

That is what Paul expresses in Romans 6. He says that for us to talk about continuing in sin is unthinkable. If we only realize our unity with Christ—that we have been planted together in the likeness of His death and, therefore, rise with Him—we could never speak like that. All we in this room can say, "I do not talk about continuing in sin," but

any time we do something that is sinful in the world or we go to a place where a lot of sin is committed, then we are saying, deep down in our minds, that we want to continue in that.

We cannot be joined to Christ and be one with Him and at the same time ask, "Will we continue in sin?" Does this great truth give me license to go on doing the things that formerly appealed to me? Certainly not! "It is inconceivable," Paul says.

Thus Paul puts his argument and demonstration before us, and from this we are to draw our final conclusion: that in this world, we have to always realize, when we talk to others, that the heart should not be approached directly. The will should not be approached directly, either.

This is a very important principle to bear in mind, both in personal dealings and in preaching. The heart should always be influenced through understanding of the mind, then the heart, and then the will. We have no right to make a direct attack on the heart either in ourselves or anybody else. That is exactly what televangelists do in mainstream Christianity. They appeal to the heart to bring in huge numbers. They go for the kill of the heart first, in their sales pitch, to bring in that closing sale.

Some have found false comfort, to their own detriment, in the fact that they could still weep and be moved emotionally in worship services. They humanly reason, "I can't be all that bad or else I wouldn't respond like this," and they have convinced themselves. However, it is a false deduction, because they themselves may have produced their emotional response. They caused it to happen if they do not produce good fruit as a result of it and if there is no overcoming sin and no changes for the better in their lives. Had it been a response to truth, their lives would have been changed and produced fruit.

Truth is received through God's greatest gift to humans, the mind, the understanding. God made man in His own image, and there is no question but that the greatest part of this image is the mind with its capacity for apprehending truth. God has endowed us with that, and God sends truth to us in that way. Of course, His Holy Spirit is necessary to rightly use the understanding. Knowledge without the use of the Holy Spirit cannot produce spiritual wisdom.

God forbid, though, that anyone thinks that it ends with the intellect. It starts there, but it goes on. It then moves the heart, and finally the person yields his will. He obeys, not grudgingly or unwillingly, but with the whole heart.

Obeying From the Heart by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

The prophet Jeremiah recorded God's promise to Judah that he would eventually restore them as His people, but we have this promise now as God's church:

Jeremiah 24:7 Then I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am the Lord; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, for they shall return to Me with their whole heart.

Our lives are in the process of becoming glorious perfect lives that take up and captivate the entire personality. May God make us stable Christians, men and women of whom it can be said that we are obviously and undoubtedly obeying from the heart the form of doctrine that has been delivered to us.