

A HEART RIGHT WITH GOD

ACTS 8:21 • TV090A

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Acts 8:21

“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”

I’m going to speaking to you on this subject: **“A HEART RIGHT WITH GOD.”**

Now, in the **8th chapter of Acts: verse 21** we read these words: *“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter for your heart is not right with God.”*

What’s the background of this statement? Well, Phillip had gone down into Samaria to preach and God sent a great revival and there was a man called Simon Magus who heard Phillip preach.

And the Scripture says of him that, he believed the gospel, he was baptized and he identified himself with the disciples and with the other believers.

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And when the apostles in Jerusalem heard about this great revival in Samaria and that many Gentiles had believed the Gospel they sent Peter and John down to Samaria to visit with these people.

And when Peter and John came down to Samaria they prayed for these Gentiles and laid hands upon them and they received the Holy Spirit. The Gentiles received the Holy Spirit like the Jews did at Pentecost.

Now, when Simon Magus who had heard Phillip preach and had believed the Gospel that Phillip preached, for the Scripture said he believed the Gospel and was baptized. And when Simon saw that for the laying on of the hands of the apostles that these Gentiles received the gift of the Holy Spirit, he offered Peter money.

And he said, "I'll give you money if you'll give me this power that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands he shall receive the Holy Ghost." And Peter looked at him and he said, "*Thou art in the gall of bitterness. Thy money perish with thee because you've thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money.*"

And that's when Peter said, "Your heart is not right with God. You don't have any part in this matter. You don't have any part in the kingdom of God. Even though you are identified with the apostles and you are a companion of other believers and you are a professed believer in the doctrine and even though you have been baptized, your heart not being right in the sight of God, means that you have no part nor lot in this matter."

My friends; a relationship with God is more than an outward profession, it's more than an act of baptism, it's more than submission to ceremony. Salvation is a heart work. It's a work that is performed in the heart. It's a heart relationship with God.

Listen to these Scriptures: Over in **1 Samuel 16:7** the Scripture says: "*God seeth not as man seeth for man looketh on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.*" Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.

Listen to this Scripture from **Ezekiel**; God said: "*Behold; I will put my spirit within you. I will write my laws within you and I will give you a new heart.*"

And then the wise man Solomon wrote in **Proverbs chapter 4:23**: "*Keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.*" That's where the issues of life are decided, not with the feet or the hands, or even the lips or an act of the body, but the heart. That's where it's all decided. There's where the issues of life take place.

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And then, in **Psalm 51:17**: “*The sacrifices of God are a broken heart, a broken and a contrite spirit O Lord thou will not despise.*” Then the Scripture says in **Psalm 34**: “*The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and he saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*”

So, this thing; this is what Peter is saying to this man Simon Magus; “*Your heart’s not right with God.*” Now, you may have all the outward signs of religion. You may have all the outward professions of religion. You may have gone through the motions and even submitted to the ordinances. But when your heart’s not right with God you don’t have any part in the kingdom of God, for my friend, conviction is a heart work.

“**In Acts chapter 2:37** it is said of the people at Pentecost when Peter preached to them that, “*they were pricked in their hearts.*” That’s where God did the work of conviction; it was done in the heart.

Now, it’s one thing to know by reading that vinegar is sour or by hearing someone tell you that it’s sour. It’s quite another thing to taste it and to know by experience that it’s sour.

And this is the thing about conviction of sin; it’s one thing to read about it or to hear someone tell about it or hear someone preach about it. It’s quite another thing to be so convicted of sin that you feel your sins and that you taste them and that you grieve over them, and mourn over them, and weep over them in your heart, to know by experience, as Paul said, “*the exceeding sinfulness of sin.*”

In **Matthew 15:17 and 18** our Lord said: “*It’s not that which goeth into the mouth that defileth a man.*” We can’t confine sin to outward acts or manners, actions, deeds, or even words.

He says, that which defiles us is that which comes out of our hearts, “*for out of the heart proceeds evil thoughts, hatred, adulteries, and blaspheme.*” All of these things come out of the heart. That’s where this thing of conviction, real conviction of sin takes place; it takes place in the heart.

And then faith is a heart work. The Scripture says: “*If thou wilt confess with thy mouth Jesus to be Lord and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*” Faith is a heart work.

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Our Lord said in **Luke 16:15**; I wish you would turn to that in your Bible. Do you have a Bible there by your television or there by the chair where you are sitting? Turn to **Luke 16:15** and read what the Lord said to those people.

In **Luke 16:15** he said unto them: *“You are they which justify yourselves before men but God knows your heart. And that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination to God.”* Now you think about that.

Faith is a heart work. That’s where the work of conviction and the work of revelation and the work of understanding and the work of believing is performed; it’s done in the heart.

You can walk down all the aisles of all the churches and tent meetings and evangelistic services in this country. You can make professions of faith until you grow old.

You can be baptized a dozen times. You can be confirmed, christened, sprinkled, and all of these things, but if your hearts not right with God you have no part nor lot in this matter. That’s what Peter said, for faith is a heart work.

And then I’ll tell you something else; worship is a heart work. That’s where worship takes place, in the heart. Our Lord said in **Matthew chapter 15:7 and 8**: *“Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”*

Have you ever been guilty of that, singing a hymn or maybe praying a prayer, or maybe preaching a sermon, and your heart was no more in communion with God, your heart was no more in fellowship with God, your mind was off somewhere else?

Well now, that’s not worship; worship is a heart work. Actually, you can worship God and not say a word and not sing a hymn or not sing a Psalm, or not even take part in any outward ceremony. *“The Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groaning’s which cannot be uttered.”* Worship’s a heart work.

And I, I’m afraid really that we put too much importance on words in this matter of worship. Somebody’s always got to be saying something or making an announcement or leading cheers you know, or having a special song, or some kind of entertainment. Worship is a heart work.

And that’s what we are talking about. Peter looked at Simon and he said “Simon; you’ve heard Phillip preach and you’ve made an outward profession and you’ve been baptized and you’ve lined yourself up with this group of believers but your heart’s not right with God. And when

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your heart's not right with God you are in the gall of bitterness and you have no part nor lot in this matter. Cleanse first the inward part."

Did you know our Lord said to the religious men of His day; they got all cleaned up outwardly so that they would appear religious and appear pious and appear holy to people who saw them. They bragged about their holiness and bragged about their prayers and bragged about their fasting and all these other things.

And Christ said: *"You appear beautiful unto men on the outside but on the inside you are full of corruption, hypocrisy and excess."* Then He said: *"Cleanse first that which is within that the outward might be cleansed also."*

Where does it start? It starts in the heart. It doesn't start with the outward flesh; it starts in the heart and when the heart is right with God the rest will be ok. If you are right with God you are right with everybody else. And if you're wrong with God you are wrong all the way.

Now, here are four things that I want us to think about in the message today:

First of all: A heart right with God is above in importance in all things!

Secondly: Heart worship is so important that outward form without heart worship is an abomination to God! That's how important it is; it's so important that religious form without a genuine sincerity of heart; God despises it. Now I am going to show you something in a moment taken from this Book (God's Word) on that point that will absolutely shock you.

Thirdly: Outward form, an outward form of religion, formal religion and worship is a whole lot easier than heart work; it's a whole lot easier!

Fourthly: How can I obtain a right relationship with God in the heart?

First of all: A heart right with God is above in importance in all things!

Where does one get a new heart, a right heart, a regenerated heart, a single heart, a broken heart, and a contrite spirit? Well; let's look at these four things. Now, will you think about them with me?

Now, salvation is a heart work, this thing of a relationship with God is a heart work; *"God looks on the heart. Keep your heart; out of it are the issues of life."* Now, heart work is more

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important than anything else. There's nothing else so important as a heart right with God. It's more important than sacrifice and ceremony.

Saul, king Saul of Israel, was told by the Lord to go down into the land of the Amalekites, enemies of God, enemies of Israel, and destroy the whole land, destroy everything, everybody, all the cattle, everything.

The judgment, the wrath of God had fallen upon that evil, pagan, idolatress nation, and God said, "Wipe it from the earth." So Saul went down there and he did most of what God told him, but he saved the king as a trophy. He brought back spoils and he brought back some sheep, oxen, lambs, and all types of animals like that.

And the prophet Samuel came to him and said: "*Why did you bring back these lambs and sheep and oxen?*" Oh, Saul said; "*I brought those back to sacrifice to the Lord.*" And Samuel said, "*Saul, God is angry with thee. To obey is better than sacrifice.*"

Do you see what he is saying there? A heart right with God, a heart obedient unto the Lord, a heart in tune with God, a heart in fellowship with God is more than all the burnt offerings and sacrifices and ceremonies we possibly can go through.

And then heart worship is better than Sabbath observance. These religious Jews had their Sabbath Days all fixed up. You could just take so many steps. You could do only certain things. Nothing could be done on the Sabbath Day but what was permitted.

What did our Lord do? Why, He walked right through the cornfield and picked corn and His disciples ate it. Then He went down and healed a man with a withered hand and He healed somebody else on the Sabbath Day.

And the Pharisees got all upset about this. "Why; you violated our Sabbath Day. You violated the Holy Day. You violated the special day." And our Lord said, "*Man wasn't made for the Sabbath; the Sabbath was made for man.*"

And mercy is more important than Sabbath observance. Mercy is more important than ceremonial observance. Mercy is more important than sacrifice and ceremony, mercy of heart, right with God.

And then a heart right with God is better than study and knowledge. Now, I think we ought to "*study to show ourselves approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

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We need to give ourselves to reading the Word of God. It's by the Word of God that we grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ. It's by the Word of God that we're sanctified. It's by the Word of God that we are comforted and strengthened.

But my friend; listen to **James in chapter 1:22**: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" To be a doer of the word, is more important than to be a hearer of the Word only. In other words, to be a doer, an obedient servant of the Word of God, is more important than being just a hearer of the Word of God, a student of the Word of God, a theologian or an orthodox Christian. It's more important to put grace in practice than to sit around reading about grace all the time or talking about grace all the time.

And then, a heart right with God is more important than the gifts of the ministry. In **1 Corinthians 12** Paul talks about the gift of healing, the gift of tongues, the gift of faith, different gifts. And then he says in **verse 31**, "*Covet earnestly the best gifts.*" Covet to have the gifts of the ministry. But I'll show you, he said, something better. "I'll show you a more excellent way." And that's when he begins that **chapter 13 in 1 Corinthians** where he says: "*I may speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love it profiteth me nothing.*" Do you see that? Love is more important than the gifts of the ministry, a heart right with God. A heart right with God will love God with all the heart and will love our neighbors as ourselves.

And then, this thing of a heart right with God is more important than strong faith and assurance. What does it say in **1 Corinthians 13:13**? "*Now abideth faith, hope, and love, faith (assurance, faith and confidence). But the greatest of these is love,*" not strong faith and not strong assurance, but love.

Yes love is above all things, even; now I wouldn't disturb you or shock you or upset you, but listen to me, a heart right with God is more important than good works and morality.

You read in **Luke 18** how the Pharisee stood in the temple and prayed thus with himself: "*God I thank you I'm not like other men. I tithe and fast and pray and give alms to the poor. Why I'm not like this publican.*"

And do you know the one that was justified? It wasn't this man; it was the publican who smote upon his breast and cried in anguish and conviction and repentance: "*O God; be merciful to me a sinner.*" You see, it's a heart work; a heart right with God is more important than anything else.

Secondly: Religious form without heart is an abomination to God, God despises it!

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Now listen to this Scripture; in **Isaiah chapter 66:2-3** and here God is talking about these Israelites who had approached Him with their lips and their sacrifices and their ceremonies and rituals but whose hearts were far from Him.

And He said: *“For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog’s neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine’s blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations.”*

People who do their sacrificing and all of their ceremonies but whose heart, whose hearts are not in it, to come before God without a sincere heart and without a broken heart and without a repentant heart and without a proper contrite spirit; *“when you kill an ox, you might as well have killed a man.”*

That’s what it says. Do you see it right there in **Isaiah 66:2?** *“And to sacrifice a lamb; you may as well cut off a dog’s head.”* Now, can you imagine one of those Israelites of old coming before the tabernacle of God, the Holy of Holies, to offer a sacrifice and bringing a dog and cutting the dog’s head off and putting it on the place of worship there?

You say: “Well, they wouldn’t do a thing like that.” God says *“to come before me with a lamb.”* Without a proper spirit you may as well cut off a dog’s head. And to offer an oblation without the proper heart condition and attitude he said *“you might as well offer pig’s blood.”* Look at that!

And He said: *“You that burn incense* (and burning of incense is a type of the prayers of Jesus Christ).” He said, *“You may as well worship and idol.”* That’s how serious it is.

Do you see how serious this thing is of going through the motions of playing church and playing at worship and playing and approaching God while our hearts are not in it and our hearts are not sincere and our hearts are not right with God? God says: *“It’s an abomination!”*

And Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 13:** *“Though I speak with the tongues (eloquence) of an angel and have not love I’m a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. And though I understand all mysteries and prophecies and have faith so that I can remove mountains and have not love; I’m nothing. And though I bestow my goods to feed the poor and give my body to be burned as a*

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martyr and have not love; it profiteth me nothing.” It’s an abomination to God. Heart religion is the very essence of it. An outward form without heart faith is an abomination to God.

Thirdly: An outward form of worship and religion is a lot easier than heart work, than heart worship!

That’s true; let me show you that. You see, it’s a lot easier to wear a symbol of submission than it is to display a spirit of submission to God. In other words, it’s a whole lot easier for me to turn my collar around backwards and look like a preacher than it is down here in my heart to walk with God.

It’s a lot easier for me to dress in a black uniform with a big, broad-brimmed hat, and look like a preacher and fold my hands this way and act like I’m pious and holy. It’s one thing to wear a symbol of submission and it’s another thing to have a spirit of submission. That other is easier.

Fourthly: It’s easier to preach grace than to produce grace and it’s easier to preach a sovereign God than to trust a sovereign God!

But which is more important? It’s a whole lot easier to go to an altar than to build one in your heart. Huh? It’s a whole lot easier to go running down the front of a church and fall at a wooden altar than it is to build one in your heart, weep in your heart, grieve in your heart, repent in your heart, believe in your heart, and love God with your heart. God looks on the heart.

And then it’s a whole lot easier to argue doctrine than it is to live by that doctrine and it’s a whole lot easier to give my money than to give myself. That’s a lot easier.

I can send my money down to the church in a payment pledge. That’s a whole lot easier than giving myself. It’s a whole lot easier to wear a cross than it is to carry one. It’s a whole lot easier to send missionaries than to be one.

It’s a whole lot easier to tell others that we ought to forgive than to forgive others. It’s a whole lot easier to praise God with the lips than to praise God with the heart.

And it’s a whole lot easier to give up outward sin’s and habit’s than it is to give up pride, hatred, anger, malice, jealousy, covetousness, these things that thrive in the heart. It can’t be seen by anyone but God. Now, we can cover that up pretty good.

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I'll tell you the reason that outward form is a whole lot easier than inward heart worship. The reason it's easier is because heart worship and heart faith is unseen by men, unrecognized by men, and unrewarded by men.

Well preacher; how will people know I give if I don't tell them? Preacher, how will people know that I pray and fast if I don't tell them? How will people know I'm holy if I don't tell them? How will people know that I'm humble if I don't tell them? Now these things are to be done as unto the Lord.

And I will tell you this, you can't hide the grace of God any more than you can hide a river in the desert or a 100 watt bulb in a dark room. If God's grace is in your heart it'll shed forth and it'll shine forth and it'll give forth but *"it's as unto the Lord,"* whether anybody knows it or not. If our hearts are right with God, all will be right.

Well, how does a right heart receive? There are four things:

First of all: By the grace of God he said: *"I'll give you a new heart"*

And when David prayed in **Psalm 51** he said: *"O God; create in me a clean heart. Renew within me a right spirit."* My friend; if you want a heart right with God, pray for it; seek the Lord. A new heart is God's work.

Secondly: It's by the merits and righteousness of Jesus Christ! Our Lord died for our sins and He dwells within us and the life which we now live in the flesh, *"we live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave himself for us."* And the right attitude is not of us; it is Christ that dwells in us. And works of righteousness are not our works but His works who dwells within us. And then we receive it by the Spirit of God. We walk in the Spirit, we worship in the Spirit, and we serve God in the Spirit. *"If any man hath not the spirit of Christ he is none of his."* The Holy Spirit is the regenerating agent. He's the one that gives the new heart, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

And then I'll tell you something else: the way to receive a new heart is to take up your abode at the cross and live there. Do you want to learn how to love; go to the cross? *"Greater love hath no man than this than he lay down his life for his friends."*

Do you want to learn how to give? Go to the cross and stay there. Christ gave Himself. Do you want to know how to forgive people? Go to the cross: *"Father forgive them; they know not what they do."*

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Do you want the key to humility? Go to the cross. Do you want the key to gratitude and submission? Go to the cross. That's where you get a new heart, at Calvary!