

Living Out of My New Heart in Christ

The heart is always central to what God is doing in someone's life. You cannot truly change a person's behavior without changing the heart first. God's first work of grace in the life of a believer is regeneration of the heart. After regeneration takes place, things will change in a person's life. As a person grows in his relationship with God and sanctification, the heart will always be central to the changes being made in the person's life. For instance, Malachi 4:6 talks about God turning the hearts of fathers toward their children and hearts of children toward their fathers, lest He come smite the earth with a curse. We are told in scripture to guard our hearts with all diligence. Some people need healing in the heart from the wounds and lies. Some need cleansing of their hearts because of habitual sins like pornography. For some people, bitterness infects their hearts with resentment and anger, and they need to forgive to have their hearts open again to what God is doing.

Our Greatest Problem—The Flesh

What is the Flesh?

The New Testament uses the term flesh (Greek—*sarx*) primarily in two ways:

1. To refer to the physical body or earthly existence. (*1 Cor. 15:39; 2 Cor. 4:11*)
 2. To refer to the “sinful programming” of the body as orientated away from God through either licentiousness or legalism. (*Rom. 8:13-14; Gal. 5:13*)
- The flesh desires to have existence (a way of life) apart from God—it's the part of our being that is choosing and operating apart from God.
 - Scripture uses this term in a morally evil sense to describe man's unredeemed humanness. (*Romans 6:6; Romans 8; Galatians 5; Ephesians 2*)
 - The flesh is hardwired into our physical being.
 - The flesh is self-reliant rather than God-dependent.
 - The flesh is focused on self instead of being focused on others. It is focused on what self desires instead of what Christ desires.

Satan's Goals:

1. To keep you walking in the flesh
2. To have you reason in the flesh
3. To get you to respond in the flesh

Important Scriptures on the flesh:

1. **Romans 13:14**—“*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and **make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.***” (Provision = planning ahead, forethought)
2. **Galatians 5:13**—“*For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; **only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh...***” (Opportunity = central base of operation)
3. **Galatians 6:8**—“*For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.*” (Corruption = degeneration, decaying)
4. **Philippians 3:3**—“*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have **no confidence in the flesh,***” (Confidence = human effort to be made righteous)
5. **1 John 2:16**—“*For all that is in the world—the **lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.***”
6. **1 Peter 2:11**—“*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, **abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul,***” (Abstain = hold yourself away, disciplined)

Victory over the flesh is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 8:10-13—“*But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. **For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.***”

Walking in the Spirit vs. Walking in the Flesh

Galatians 5:16-26—“*I say then: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.*”

Walking in the Spirit

1. Galatians 5:16—All believers have the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:9; 1 Cor. 6:19-20) as the personal power for living to please God. The form of the Greek verb translated “walk” indicates continuous action, or a habitual lifestyle. Walking also implies progress. As a believer submits to the Spirit’s control—that is, responds in obedience to the simple commands of Scripture—he grows in his spiritual life.

2. Galatians 5:17—“*They are contrary to one another.*” The flesh opposes the work of the Spirit and leads the believer toward sinful behavior he would not otherwise be compelled to do.

3. Galatians 5:18—“*led by the Spirit.... not under the law.*” Take your choice; these are mutually exclusive. Either you live by the power of the Holy Spirit, which results in righteous behavior and spiritual attitudes (vv. 22–29), or by the law, which can only produce unrighteous behavior and attitudes (vv. 19–21).

Walking in the flesh

The sins of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21)—these sins characterize man living under the impotent commands of the law. Paul’s list, which is not exhaustive, encompasses three areas of human life: sex, religion, and human relationships. (For other lists, see Rom. 1:24–32; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10) The flesh is evident and manifests itself in obvious and certain ways.

When a Christian walks by the Spirit and manifests His fruit, he needs no external law to produce the attitudes and behavior that please God (cf. Rom. 8:4).

You must understand that the flesh is not the real you. You have a new heart in Christ. You must accept this reality to be able to learn to live out of your new heart.

Romans 7:12-20—“*So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good. Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin. For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.*”

What is the heart?

The heart is more than just emotions. The heart is the center of human personality. It is the place where we hold our deepest beliefs and convictions. The heart deals with realities. It is the source of our longings, fears, desires, hopes, and dreams. It is the “real you.”

- Romans 10:9—We must believe in the Lord Jesus from our heart.
- Proverbs 4:23—*“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”*
- Ephesians 3:17—God dwells in our hearts.

What was God’s original design for mankind?

- Genesis 1:27—*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”*

The story of man does not begin with sin. It starts with man being created in God’s image. It starts with a beauty, dignity, and glory bestowed on the human race. This was God’s original design.

How did sin impact God’s original design?

- Genesis 3—We deliberately chose to rebel against God, to disobey Him, to go our own way.
- Genesis 4-5—The effects of man’s sinful nature were displayed in the murder of Abel and the progressively deepening corruption of the human race.
- Genesis 6:5—Every intent of man’s heart was only evil continually.
- Jeremiah 17:9—*“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (NKJV)*

Man is totally depraved. The heart of man is fallen. Something has gone deeply wrong deep within us. Our hearts are depraved—corrupt at the deepest level. We are incapable of loving God or of being what He created us to be.

God’s promise of a Savior

- Isaiah 53:4-6
- Jeremiah 31:33—God promises something new. He will write His law on our hearts.
- Ezekiel 36:26,27—He will give us a new heart.
God knew that the problem of sin was a matter of the heart. Therefore, He promised a Savior who would deal with our hearts.
- Matthew 1:21—God’s promise that He will save His people from their sins.
What does this offer of salvation mean? That my sins are forgiven? Or is there something more?

A New Creation (2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15)

Romans 6:11—“*So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.*”

How do we overcome our sinful behavior? It is not through keeping the law in our own strength. God promises something new—a new heart.

What Jesus taught on the new heart



Luke 6:45—“*The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.*”

Luke 8:15—“*But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*” (NKJV)

The bearing of good fruit comes out of a good heart.

What Peter and Paul taught on the new heart

- Acts 15:9—God has purified our hearts through faith.
- Romans 2:28, 29—Our hearts are circumcised.
- 1 Timothy 1:5—Love from a pure heart.
- 2 Timothy 2:22—Those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

The work of Christ reaches and changes the human heart! We are no longer living under Jeremiah 17:9. Our nature has been radically transformed. Without God addressing our hearts, the New Testament would be more of the law that we would be unable to keep.

- Romans 8:1ff—We no longer live under the condemnation of the law.
- Galatians 5:24—We have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

We speak of the doctrines of regeneration and sanctification. These are not just doctrines or positional truths. They are present, experiential realities. There has been an actual change in our being. Change comes not from being more committed to living the Christian life, but from embracing, understanding, and applying what Christ has done.

Living from the New Heart (Rom. 6:12, Rom. 7:17, Eph. 3:17)

Yes, we still struggle with sin. But we have a choice now! We do not have to identify with sin anymore. We are free to live out of the good heart.

Because we have a new heart, we can make the right choices. *“That’s not what I want. That’s not who I am.”* There is a source of good desire within us, because Christ now dwells in our hearts.

Obstacles to Embracing the New Heart

- Some fear that by speaking of the “new heart,” we are somehow diminishing the goodness of God and His work. In reality, we are exalting God and the work of Christ in bringing His redemption to our hearts.
- Sometimes our limited worldview (just God and us) leads us to believe we must have bad hearts. We forget that there is spiritual warfare going on, and that Satan our enemy comes against us with his temptations and accusations. If we don’t embrace the truth about our new hearts, we will end up agreeing with the lies of the enemy.
- Throughout church history, the struggle to hold on to the true gospel has been very common. The gospel is constantly being twisted. (See Galatians 3) Satan comes to kill, steal, and destroy (John 10:10), and he loves to steal the beautiful truth of the gospel from the church.

The Impact of Embracing the New Heart

- **In our community:** Without embracing Christ’s redemptive work in our hearts, we will end up going back to the law. We will be dominated by a culture of performance and fear (Romans 8:15). We will resort to a “sin management” gospel, instead of calling out the good we see God doing in our own and each other’s hearts.
- **In our calling:** When we believe that our new heart in Christ is good, we are free to explore and pursue our godly desires instead of being afraid of our desires. We can learn to live from our heart instead of living a life of obligation or duty. People who abandon their hearts cannot find their calling in life.
- **In our personal life:** It is possible for us to live the holy lives that God calls us to. We can enjoy deep intimacy with Christ. Living from the heart brings joy, life, passion, and freedom—all of which flow from the work of Christ in our hearts.

What You Believe About Who You Are Determines Your Behavior

Truth

Deception

Start Here

OR



6. Freedom and Victory

5. I reckon myself dead to sin and alive to God, and I live by the Truth.

4. I understand that Satan has no authority because I'm dead to sin.

3. I realize my true identity as a saint; I am righteous, holy and blameless.

2. I appropriate my co-crucifixion and co-resurrection and Christ as my life.

1. I know that my old self (sin nature) was crucified, that the body of sin is destroyed.

1. I believe that my old self (sin nature) is very much alive and active.

2. I resign myself to a life-long struggle of trying to do what I should.

3. I realize my true identity is my flesh, and I am a sinner.

4. I understand that because I am a sinner; Satan exercises authority.

5. I focus on the sin in my life to fight it, but it overcomes me.

6. Bondage and Defeat

Understanding Key Definitions

- **Justification:** God's work of atonement in changing sinners to saints at the moment of salvation (*Rom. 5:1, 16-18; 10:10; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 2:15-16; 3:11*). Justification is instantaneous upon the individual's expression of faith in Christ.
- **Sanctification:** The progressive outer change in the believer's daily walk (*1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 1 Pet. 1:2*). Sanctification continues throughout life. "*The progressive work of sanctification is only fully effective when radical, inner transformation of justification is realized and appropriated by faith.*" (*Victory over the Darkness*, pp. 71-72)
- **Nature:** Man's essence—either dead in sin or alive in Christ, ruled either by the kingdom of darkness or by the kingdom of God.
- **Old nature:** Our essence before we were born again spiritually. According to Ephesians 5:8, our nature prior to salvation was darkness. We were not *in* darkness; we *were* darkness.
- **New nature:** Our core essence because of our union with God through spiritual birth. We are no longer "in Adam"; now we are "in Christ." Having become a "partaker of the divine nature," (*2 Pet. 1:4*) we have been changed from darkness to light. We are not instructed to improve the old nature; we are instructed to live in harmony with the new nature we have "in Christ" (*Eph. 5:8*).
- **Old self (old man):** The unbeliever under the influence of the old sinful nature. The old self is crucified with Christ and dies when the unbeliever receives Christ (*Rom. 6:2-4, 6-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3*). The "old man" is who we are "in Adam."
- **New self (new man):** The believer under the influence of the new nature in Christ. The new self springs to life at the resurrection of Christ and becomes part of the believer's experience at salvation (*Rom. 6:5, 8-11; 1 Cor. 15:20-22; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3-4*). The "new man" is who you are "in Christ."
- **The flesh:** The tendency within each person to operate independently of God and center his interests on himself. Unbelievers operate totally in the flesh (*Rom. 8:7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:15*). In believers, the flesh remains, conditioned by the old nature. We are responsible to render these old actions, reactions, emotional responses, thought patterns, memories and habits inoperative (*Rom 8:12-13; Col. 3:5-10*).
- **Sin:** Living independently of God. Sin permeates the old nature of the unbeliever. Sin's power is broken in the believer (*Rom. 6:7, 11; 8:10*), but it still strongly appeals to the flesh to live independently of God (*Rom. 7:15-25*).

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