

# WAY OF THE HEART

Sermonette given by Mark Robertson (1994)

We are in the middle of the Days of Unleavened Bread and probably more than any other time of the year, this week we are in now, epitomises the things that make us different as a Christian church. All the ceremony of:

- The Passover service
- Eating unleavened bread all week
- Holy days off work & school

I noticed in the latest Plain Truth that a reader call the church legalistic because of the laws we keep. Some would say that our definition of Christianity is different than theirs. At least our execution of it is certainly different.

What is Christianity really? If you asked around a bit you would get many answers and all sorts of simple or complex explanations.

Over the years I have heard and read many definitions of Christianity. It's described:

- In the dictionary as the doctrine of Christ.
- Some might rightly say that Christianity is a way of character development.
- You might call it a set of rules and laws that lead to happiness.
- A good explanation of Christianity is that it is – a way of life - and it is.

But one short statement that I heard a minister once give is the best definition I have ever heard of Christianity. He described Christianity as: A way of the heart. Just think about that statement: A way of the heart.

The reason that I personally like that statement is that it goes beyond the clinical definitions of things like character development or rules and laws and gets more to the core of the matter. If Christianity is a way of the heart then it means that it is something that is meant to operate within our deepest inner feelings and thoughts. In biblical terms you can't get any deeper than a person's heart.

If we read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation - we can see that God has always been primarily interested in the heart. All the things that came along whether it be sacrifices, rituals, punishments - all revolved around the matter of man's heart.

Listen to the words God spoke at Mt Sinai. We can hear the longing in the words He spoke. In Deuteronomy He says:

"Oh, that they had such a heart in them ... that it might be well with them and with their children forever."

It's never changed! God has been searching the hearts of men since He first created Adam.

- From Noah's day where He found their heart evil continually.
- To David: a man after God's own heart.
- To Solomon whose many wives turned his heart away.

Remember the Pharisee that asked Christ: "What is the first commandment of the law?"

Christ answered and said: "to love God with all your heart and all your soul".

It all seems to revolve around the matter of the heart. It doesn't matter if you're 5 years old, whether your baptised or not - God is intently interested in what goes on inside your heart more than anything else.

David and Samuel were chosen in their youth - before they received the Holy Spirit - because of their hearts.

In Proverbs 4:23 we find a powerful admonition for all of us: "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." Out of our hearts spring the issues of life.

This is an admonition - that we have to KEEP our heart with all diligence. ITS HARD WORK! AND ITS HARD TO KNOW WHATS GOING ON DOWN THERE HALF THE TIME!

As a teenager in the church years ago I really didn't think of this way of life as a way of the heart. I would probably say that I thought more of Christianity as a way of rules.

That I had to do things like:

- Not do certain things on the sabbath
- I had to fast on the Day of Atonement
- I had to be careful not to eat leavened bread
- I had to go to church each week
- I had to tithe

I thought that I was somehow keeping in God's good books by doing all these things. Even today I can often drift back to thinking that God will punish us if we slip in one of the rules

You know if we are not careful we can tend to think of Christianity like this.

- Think that if we just keep the right ones
- Just do the right thing
- Like trying to find the correct formula to kingdom

More Christians have squabbled and fought over doctrinal issues than any other point. Yet its really what goes on in our heart that's the issue that God is judging us by.

Look at this example of some of the greatest rule keepers of all. Christ said to the Pharisees: "These people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments or men" (Matt. 15:8-9).

They were keeping the technical rules - even more than what was required - but their heart was WAY OFF BEAM. It is possible to keep all the rules and be totally wasting your time!

And yet this same issue of a way of rules versus a way of the heart is where so many Christian people go astray. They correctly see that Christianity is a way of the heart so they toss out the rules! They say that God's commandments and laws and holy days are done away. They lose perspective.

It IS all a matter of the heart! But without God's laws how can we ever test our heart to see if it is on track?

Christ said He came not to destroy the law but to magnify it. And how did he magnify it? He put it back into the heart where it belonged!

- No longer don't just not murder but don't hate in your heart
- No longer don't just not commit adultery but don't lust in your heart

Its the heart that is the key. God gave us these laws - not to test us or try us - but so that we can live a happy life. The sabbath is for us. The Holy Days are for us.

It's very simple really: The commandments and sabbath and holy days are there for our benefit so that we can develop our heart in the way God wants us to and have a happy life at the same time.

They are a guide to our heart. It's not a burdensome set of rules. God knows our heart - but He wants us to also know its true status.

I started studying this matter of the heart many months ago. And really there is so much in the Bible about the heart.

- How God searches our hearts
- How God tests our hearts
- How He gave us the laws as a guide for our heart
- Even how God's own heart works (David was like him)

It is a worthwhile study to follow up and go further with. It's so important to get our foundation right in our heart.

If you want a happy and fulfilling life you will keep your heart with diligence when you are young. You will save a lot of heartache later.

Use God's laws as the measure of testing your heart. Don't use your peers or other worldly standards - it doesn't work.

Give attention to what goes on inside your heart because if you don't keep it properly it eventually will find some expression in your life.

In Ecclesiastes 11:9 we read: "Rejoice, O young person, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment."

The only way to guarantee that your heart will guide you in the correct path is to care for it, to watch what we see and do. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it springs the issues of life.