

Why We Sin When We Know So Much: Healing the Hidden Heart by the Spirit

Musings on Calvin's View of the Double Knowledge

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Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves."

John Calvin

"I desire to know God and the soul." "Nothing more?" "Nothing whatever."

Augustine

Nothing is more helpful to reduce pride than the actual experience of self-knowledge. If we are discouraged by it, we have misunderstood its meaning.

Thomas Keating

A. Introduction:

Why is spiritual change sometime so difficult and slow? How is it that a believer can know so much truth & desire the good and yet so deeply struggle with sin, with being loving, with obedience etc.

The Problem:

The Incontinent Person: Knows the good, desires good, chooses good but fails to do the good.

The Continent Person: Knows the good, desires good, chooses good, does the good with no joy

The Virtuous Person: Knows the good, desires good, chooses good, does the good with joy.

B. The Christian Faith is foremost about the heart

Mk. 12:29: "Thou shalt love the Lord your God with your whole heart"

Prov. 3:5: "Trust in the Lord with all of your heart"

I Sam 16:6-7 God looks not at the outward like most men but at the heart.

I Tim. 1:5: the goal of all instruction is love from a pure heart

1. "Heart" is used for the real or core person: Nexus of Will, Affect and Intellect

Prov. 27:19 "As in water face reflects face, so the heart of man reflects man."

I Pet. 3:3-4 Women are not to adorn the outward only but "the hidden person of the heart"

Lk. 16:15 Pharisees looked good on the outside but "God knows their hearts."

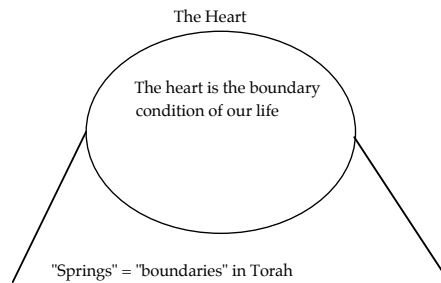
Prov. 23:7-8 Heart is what he really thinks and is about: "As a man thinks in his heart, so he is."

2. The heart directs our life: What is in the heart determines our whole of life

Prov. 4:23 "Guard over your heart with all diligence, for from it flows the springs of life."

a. Externally:

b. Internally:



Principles:

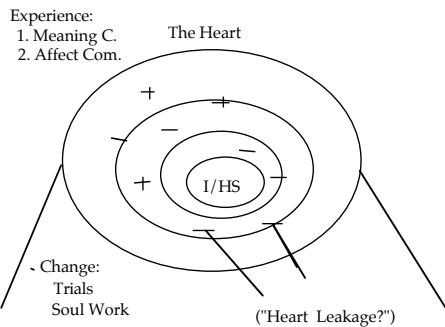
1. In general, what comes out of one's life is not by accident but is already in the heart.
2. The degree to which one is surprised by what comes out of one is the degree which one does not know his heart.

C. Why is the heart is so impregnable (as a fortress) and slow to change? (Bible's view of the Hidden Heart or Unconscious heart)

Jer. 17:9-10: "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick, who can understand it. I, the Lord, search the heart . . ."

Prov. 16:2 we think we are clean but God alone knows and weighs inner person

Prov. 14:13 "Even in laughter the heart may be in pain, And the end of joy may be grief."



D. Things to Know about a Biblical Understanding of the Hidden Heart (Bible's view of the "Unconscious"):

1. There is always more going on in the hidden heart than what is on the surface. This explains why we often do not know why we do what we do and the contents of our heart – what we really think. Our heart's motives are often hidden.
2. The degree to which we have a hidden heart of negative beliefs and desires that have not been dealt with is the degree to which we are not in control of that material and it can control us.

3. Thus, most Christians do not intend to sin; rather, they just leak. This leaking of sins of the heart does not excuse the believer from responsibility, for one is as responsible for his character as much as intended actions, despite the complex manner in which character is formed.

4. This “leaking” is all about warring beliefs and desires in the heart. This explains for why we so often act against our better intentions, why we sin when we know so much.

5. Thus, most sins are not intentions of the moment but are merely the tip of the habitual iceberg where beneath the surface is perhaps a glacier of sin and vice that has deep relational and historical roots.

6. Thus, beware of “prayers of magic” or avoidance to have God take away sins; be open to letting God teach you in humility about these.

7. No amount of (a) surface correcting of deep sinful beliefs (or overlaying the beliefs by the truth alone) or (b) immediate behavioral change in conformity to the Word will transform the heart or resolve or alter the deep beliefs and desire behind the sins of the heart (II Cor. 3:4ff).

E. How Does God Open the Heart and Begin the Process of Change-transformation:

Someone is going to have to help open the heart (1) to bring out the heart, (2) to apply love and truth to the heart and (3) to begin to assist the person in new habits of the heart. This involves both a

- Negative process of Formation (“Putting off” or Detachment): opening the heart to Biblical truth with others and with the Spirit in prayer to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and expose idols of the heart (II Cor. 10:5) and
- Positive process of Formation (“Putting on” or Attachment): opening the heart to Biblical truth as well as the love and truth from others in the Body and the Indwelling Spirit who is able to penetrate into the heart in love to convince the believer to trust God that all one’s needs are met in God’s love.
- Practically speaking, transformation will involve:

1. The Word (Heb. 4:12)

2. Trials and "Thorns in the Flesh" (II Cor12: 7-10)

3. Opening to God's Sovereign Work of Transformation in all Circumstances (Romans 8:26ff)

4. Fellow Believers (Eph. 4:15)

Incarnational Knowing of the Heart (Opening the heart with a Soul Friend)

1. Know the other hears from the "Hidden Heart"
2. Provide others with a context of safety and acceptance:
3. Bring out the hidden heart: ask questions or articulate the heart for the other.
4. Speak truth and love into the heart: interpret defenses etc.

5. Prayer and Soul Work

Divine Knowing of the Heart (Opening the heart with God in Prayer)

God alone is the master Soul Surgeon ("Divine Therapist") and is in the business of exposing men's hearts and transforming them by love and truth. All the one-another passages are to model this (encourage, love, rebuke, help one another etc.). His goal is to make our heart His home.

Ps. 139:23-24 "Search me O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts; And see if there be any hurtful way in me, And lead me in the everlasting way."

1. God's Knowledge: God knows that we hear him, pray to him, hear his Word from the "Hidden Heart."
2. God's Acceptance: We are justified by faith; there is no condemnation (Rom. 8:1).
3. God's Invitation: The Spirit invites the believer to fellowship with Him in the weaknesses of our heart (Rom. 8:26) that the power of Christ may be real (II Cor. 12:10).
4. God's Interpretation and Healing of the Hidden Heart: In the context of love and self-awareness, God wishes to speak the truth into the heart: to interpret our deep sinful beliefs motivating defenses and us and to lead us into a free life in Christ. etc.

F. The Result: A Broken and Open Heart (the beginning of the process of growth)

Ps. 51:15-17 God delights not in sacrifice but a broken and contrite heart

Joel 2:12-13 "return to me with all your heart, rend your heart and not your garments"

