

The Heart of Man (1): the Battleground

John 13:2 New American Standard Bible (NASB 1995)

During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him,...

Luke 8:11-12 New American Standard Bible (NASB 1995)

"Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. ¹² Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

Introduction

For the past few weeks, we've been learning about the heart—not the physical heart, but the spiritual center of our lives. First, we've looked at God's heart: His compassion and mercy, and His joy over one repentant sinner.

Starting today, we turn the lens inward. Scripture teaches that the human heart is not neutral—it is a battleground like a city during wartime where whoever controls the city controls the future.

Let's get this. The heart is a battle ground where God and the enemy of God vie for our love, worship, and loyalty. In this battle ground, we have two choices. Either we can work with our ally or go with the foe. God is our ally, and the devil is our foe. It is crucial to understand that our heart is like an open bowl with no lid. Thoughts can enter our hearts from many directions as long as we allow them. Once the thoughts come in, they stay in and shape our lives. Either negatively or positively.

Content

Three Parties in the Heart

God's Word identifies three parties actively at work in every human heart: *self, the devil, and God*. Every day, your heart hears three voices: one that sounds like you, one that pulls you away from God, and one that gently draws you back to Him.

Let's check them out one by one what they are doing to our hearts and what's happening in our hearts.

What Does Each Party Do to the Heart? Let's begin with self.

Self (the Gatekeeper/Watchman): The heart is where decisions are made (thousands of decisions daily)—and those decisions shape our character and destiny. It is like the steering wheel of your life. Wherever it turns, the whole car follows. Most of life's defining choices are not dramatic—they are habitual. And habits are formed in the heart.

The heart is also the place where our attitudes towards God and others come from; pride, humility, lust, greed, and gratitude. We can be very arrogant before God, or we can choose humility. Both are heart decisions. Not long ago, I talked about King Nebuchadnezzar whom the Lord humbled when he was full of himself. His pride and humility, both originated from his heart.

Devil (the Pickpocket): The next being that has access to our hearts is the devil. Here's what he does to our hearts. First, he *enslaves* our heart. He wants to rule over you as your master. He wants you to worship and serve him. To accomplish his goal, he uses two strategies.

Strategy 1: He *plants* ungodly thoughts. Strategy 2: He *steals* godly thoughts.

Please get this: he enslaves you through *thoughts* in your heart. He tempts you with lusts and greed. His strategy is to 'prompt' and 'plant' evil thoughts in your hearts (John 13:2). The Greek meaning to 'prompt' (to 'put into') is to 'throw in' from outside like you throw the basketball into the hoop. He plants all bad, unclean, negative, and destructive thoughts in your heart.

The sad reality is that a lot of us are ignorant of this truth. Not aware of this devil's strategy, many of us take all ungodly thoughts as our own and suffer consequently. Consider the example of Judas Iscariot. On the night before Jesus was crucified, He and disciples were having their Passover meal together. During the supper, the devil threw the thought of betrayal into the heart of Judas. Tragically, Judas simply took it as his own, not from the devil, and acted on it. He went out and betrayed Jesus for 30 coins of silver.

Once you allow the devil's thoughts to enter your heart, the devil populates them in you. They grow, multiply, and bear fruit. At the end, your heart is filled with evil and unclean thoughts. Jesus says that all kinds of evil flow from a heart once it is allowed to be filled: *From within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders,*

adulteries, deed of coveting and wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man (Mark 7:21-23).

Before you blame yourself for all these unclean thoughts, know this: Being tempted is not sin; welcoming temptation is. Consider who's the one that allows the devil to have access to your heart first. Beware of the devil. Take every thought into captive and examine, especially bad and unclean thoughts. Thoughts can be like flaming arrows. The question is not whether they fly—but whether you let them lodge. I will talk about how to guard our hearts next week.

Another devil's strategy is to prevent you from getting any good and godly thoughts into your heart. One example is this: he snatches away the Word of God from your heart (Luke 8:12). Why does he do that? Because he doesn't want you to be saved from your sins. He never wants you to be happy and blessed. He knows where all these blessings of God begin: *the Word of God*. He is fully aware that your life is never fulfilled without the Word of God. He hates when you fulfill God's plan and purpose for you. He dreads the fact that you will get eternal life by accepting God's Word and put it into practice. That's why he snatches God's Word from you.

Reality check.

This act of snatching God's Word happens all the time, but it happens especially during Sunday morning worship. Let's be honest. How much time do you spend each day to take God's Word into your heart? Compare it with the time that you spend before TV or on the internet. Most of us are doing a lot more filling our hearts with worldly thoughts and patterns than with God's Word. The funny thing is this: when you watch your favorite show on TV, you stay focused. You seldom fall asleep. Now, compare that experience to your sermon experience.

How many times your thoughts drift away from the sermon, while you listen to the message? Sometimes, you fall asleep while the sermon is on. You can easily say that the sermon is not interesting as your favorite TV show is. Or pastor's voice is so soothing that it puts you to sleep right away!

But know the truth: your enemy the devil is at work wherever God's Word is preached. As soon as the Word of God is spoken or read, the seed of your eternal life falls into your heart, and the devil knows that. He doesn't always attack loudly. Often, he steals quietly—like a pickpocket during worship. So, this is how he works. He diverts your

thoughts to someplace else during the sermon and snatches the Word already sown in your heart. So, by the time you come back to the sermon one or two minutes later, God's Word in your heart has been taken away by the devil. Therefore, you have nothing to keep on. At the end of the service, you say to yourself, "I didn't get anything from the sermon this morning." The enemy wants you distracted—but God wants you attentive to God's Word.

The third party that helps us with our heart is God.

God (the Heart Doctor): Let us remember it is He who created human heart. He is the One. He is the Author and Giver of our heart. We cannot hide anything from Him. He knows everything about human heart. He is our Heart Doctor. He knows what ails our heart. He knows how to fix it too.

For my curiosity, I counted how many things God does with human heart. 32 things! But I can summarize all of them in three ways. First, **God knows the heart:** He searches our heart (Jeremiah 17:10). He knows the secrets of heart (Psalm 44:21). He knows every intention and thought in our heart (1 Kings 8:39). Next, **God transforms the heart:** He gives a new heart (Ezekiel 36:26). He circumcises your heart (Deuteronomy 30:6). And, finally, **God strengthens the heart:** He strengthens the hearts of the humble (Psalm 10:17). He touches our heart to be brave (1 Samuel 10:26). He revives the heart of the contrite (Isaiah 57:15).

Get this: our heavenly Father does all these activities in our hearts for one thing: *for the fellowship with Him.* He works with our hearts for *our freedom from bondage of sin*, and for *love and eternal life.* He sets our heart free (Psalm 119:32): *I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free* (NIV). He removes all evil/unclean/negative/destructive thoughts. And He fills our hearts with good/godly thoughts. He purifies our hearts.

The Role of the Trinity: Your Divine Security Detail

As you stand on this battleground, know that you are not fighting alone for your heart. Look at the reinforcements God has placed within your walls; the entire Trinity is committed to your victory!

- **God the Father** is your **Fortress.** He is the one who strengthens your heart when you are weary. When the world says, 'give up,' the Father says, 'Be of good courage, and I will strengthen your heart!' (Psalm 27:14)
- **God the Son** is your **Dwelling King.** Through faith, Jesus Christ doesn't just visit; He takes up residence. He stands at the center of your heart, claiming every room as His own. If Christ dwells in you, the enemy has no legal right to stay! (Ephesians 3:17)

- **God the Spirit** is your **Inner Power**. He is the one who 'circumcises' the heart, cutting away the dead weight of the past. He is the one who patrols your thoughts, whispering the truth of God when the lies of the enemy get too loud (Galatians 4:6).

You have the **Father** over you, the **Son** beside you, and the **Spirit** within you. The battle is real, but the backup is total!

Conclusion

Tomorrow morning, when you wake up, your 'heart bowl' will be open. The world will try to pour in stress. The devil will try to throw in a 'basketball' of temptation. But remember: You are the watchman. You are the gatekeeper. Turn your heart toward the Father. Ask the Spirit to 'lid' your heart with His peace. Don't just live with your thoughts—examine/test them. Because whoever wins the battle for your heart today wins the direction of your life tomorrow. Choose wisely. Choose God. Submit to the Lord. Resist the devil and he will flee (James 4:7). Let's pray.