

# *THE PERFECT HEART*

Have you ever wondered what God really desires in you? Have you ever thought about what is truly well-pleasing to Him?

Most would say that the answer to those questions is perfection. They do not believe God could ever be pleased with them unless they are faultless- that is, void of mistakes and flaws. This common assumption is totally incorrect, for if we could be perfect, we would not need Jesus.

So often we feel that we disappoint the Lord because of our mistakes and imperfections. We feel that if we do not measure up to some state of "perfection" that God is not pleased with us. This "perfectionist mentality" is wrong because no one can live up to God's standard of perfection. He knows this! So what He did was send His Son to die for us that we would be made perfect in His sight. We are complete in Christ- totally independent of our works! We are perfect in His sight- not because of what we do but because of what Jesus did!

Well, I would like to share with you something that will answer these kinds of questions- What is God looking for? What does He desire in us? I consider this to be one of the single greatest revelations God has ever given me and extremely helpful in understanding God's perspective and what He favors.

As you read through the Bible and look at the lives of the patriarchs of our faith you will quickly realize that none of them were perfect. As a matter of fact, some of them did some pretty horrendous things.

If you truly pondered this, some questions would probably arise in your heart such as, "How did God use them?" and "Why did God bless them so much?" It is so hard for our mind to comprehend how God could work so mightily in the lives of these men and women because of their imperfections.

Of course, we understand that God ultimately works in and through our lives by His grace, but what is it that these patriarchs did to tap into that grace? As I have pondered this before, the Lord began to open up to me this awesome truth that I will share with you here...

Let me begin by giving you an experience I once had...

## WHAT DOES GOD RESPECT?

I remember one day I was thanking the Lord for blessing me like He had and for calling me into the ministry. I just did not understand it... Why did He choose me? Why did it seem like I was experiencing more of His favor than those around me?

These questions just raced through my mind because I did not seem qualified. I knew I had all kinds of hang-ups and sins that had not been dealt with. I knew I was so far from His standards of perfection, yet He still poured out so much of His grace in my life. Why?

Well, as I was thanking Him that day for all He was doing in my life those questions in my heart sparked me to say, "Lord, I know that you are no respecter of persons..." As that came out of my mouth the Lord interjected His response. He said, "I AM not a respecter of persons but I AM a respecter of faith and diligence." Then I saw it!

Hebrews 11:6 says, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him." When God said that to me He, in essence, was reiterating Hebrews 11:6 which speaks of faith and diligence and His promise to reward those virtues. This Scripture shows us how we can live a life of pleasing God and how we can live a life of reward after reward...It is through living a life full of faith and diligence!

When the Lord said that He was no respecter of persons that just meant He does not pick and choose individuals based on their appearance, skills, etc. It does not mean, however, that He does not look favorably upon those who diligently seek Him, those who perseveringly believe Him, and those who love Him enough to give Him all

of their heart. Those are the believers that God is well-pleased with and will manifest Himself through!

## GOD LOOKS AT THE HEART

**God does not respect the face of man! He respects the heart of man!**

Do you remember what God told Samuel when He sent him to Jesse's house to anoint Israel a new king? He said, "Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7)

When God was looking for the next leader of the children of Israel He did not look for the one who seemed qualified outwardly, He sought the one who was most qualified inwardly- that is, in the heart. He anointed David- a man after His own heart- to be the next king. And the fact that he had this kind of heart was the key.

You see, David did not have it all together (as we will see later in this teaching), but what he did have was a heart after God. He loved God with all of his heart! He knew the God of Israel! And, last but not least, he had a heart to praise God!

If you look at the lives of, not only David, but of all those who God used mightily and blessed abundantly you will see this one common trait- they had a heart after God! Although their lives were filled with imperfections it was as if God did not even see their flaws.

Actually, if you just glance through the Bible without giving any real thought to what you are reading, the Bible will give you the impression that these men and women of God were perfect. But that is totally untrue! None of them were perfect! Some were liars, prostitutes, idolaters, gossipers, doubters, loudmouths, drunkards, unethical, etc. The list could go on and on.

But, again, although they had so many imperfections they all had a heart after God and loved Him more than the things of this world. So what can we gather from this?

We can gather that God is not looking for perfect people; He is looking for people with perfect hearts! Where do I get this from?

## THE GREAT SEARCH

Let's take a look at 2 Chronicles 16:9... This verse answers those questions that we asked at the beginning. It puts it very plainly what God is looking for and what He desires.

In 2 Chronicles 16:9 we are told, "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him."

This verse shows us that God is constantly scanning the earth looking for something. He is on a search to find someone that He can bless and prosper, someone that He can anoint and use. This verse puts it this way- "to show Himself strong" through. In other words, God is looking for a people that He can manifest His glory through!

And whom did it say that He shows Himself strong on behalf of? "Those whose heart is *perfect* towards Him." God is on a great search to find those who possess this perfect heart. You see, God looks at the heart and He is looking for the perfect heart!

So what does it mean to have a "perfect heart"? The word "perfect" is translated "loyal" in the New King James version, but neither of these two words fully express the idea the Holy Spirit was trying to convey to us...

This word comes from the Hebrew word "saalem" which means "to be complete or entire." It carries the idea of being "whole or full." This word "saalem" is a derivative of the more well-known Hebrew word "shalom." This word, commonly understood as meaning "peace", means much more than that... It carries the idea of being totally blessed- complete and entire, lacking nothing! It carries the idea of possessing total peace in our life- spirit, soul, and body- with nothing missing and nothing broken. The word "shalom" is derived from this word we are looking at "saalem"- Saalem bringing in

the idea of something that is fully, completely, and wholly. So when applied to our heart “salem” describes being “whole-hearted.” It describes having a heart that is fully and completely “towards” God. The word “towards” denotes that it is possessing a heart that is totally turned towards God and seeking Him whole-heartedly.

So what 2 Chronicles 16:9 means is that God is looking for those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him or those who are whole-heartedly in love with Him, seeking Him with their whole heart. He is seeking those that have this kind of heart after Him so that He can manifest His glory through them.

You see, here is the truth I want you to see- **God is not looking for perfect people; He is looking for people with perfect hearts!** In other words, God is seeking a people who's hearts are fully devoted and in love with Him.

## IMPERFECT PEOPLE

You see, our imperfections and weaknesses are not the issue. It's our heart that He is concerned about. God never called or continues to call perfect people. They all had problems and made mistakes. You can go down the list- Abraham, Moses, Jacob, David, Peter, etc. None of them were perfect! They all had their faults just like us.

You know, the Bible never really magnifies all the Old and New Testament saint's faults. That is why so many Christians seem to be oblivious to the fact that the saints of old made mistakes and were not perfect. Everyone just seems to think they were holy saints, but that was not true! And you have to really read into and think about their lives before you can see their blunders. Why? Because the Bible does not focus on their weaknesses. It just places their names in the Faith Hall of Fame of Hebrews chapter 11! Glory to God for His mercy!

And God is not focused on our mistakes and weaknesses either! God covers our sins because God is love and love covers a multitude of sins! If we were to really consider some of the mistakes and imperfections of those that God used to change the world, we would be shocked.

All of these men and women had their own failures and weaknesses. But God didn't focus on their mistakes; He looked at their hearts. And they all possessed hearts that were perfect in His sight- that is, they whole-heartedly were following Him.

## THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

There are countless verses throughout the Word of God that talk about us whole-heartedly serving God and loving Him with all of our hearts. Even in the Law this was God's desire!

In Deuteronomy 5:29 God is quoted as saying, "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever."

Then, in Deuteronomy chapter 6, we have God giving what we found out through Jesus as the greatest commandment.

The very first admonition Jesus made when commenting on the greatest commandment was to love the Lord God with all of our hearts (see Matthew 22:37). Jesus mentioned loving God with all of our *heart* before loving God with all of our souls, all of our mind, all of our strength, and even before loving our neighbor as ourselves. Why? I believe it is because God's greatest desire and greatest purpose for us is to possess all of our hearts (i.e. to be whole-heartedly in love with Him).

You see, the Lord created Adam and Eve for the primary purpose of communion with Him... God's heart was just to have a family that will love Him with all of their hearts! **God's heart desire has always been to be whole-heartedly desired!**

So understanding this, we can see why God shows Himself so strong in the lives of those who do love Him with all their hearts. They may not have it altogether but God is well pleased with the condition of their hearts and they are, therefore, fulfilling the first principle of the greatest commandment! And I can promise you this- when you give God all of your heart- you better watch out... because God will show up and show out in your life!

## ALL OF OUR HEART

I want us to pay particular attention to the word “all” in Matthew 22:37... Jesus did not say “a portion” of our heart. He did not even say “most” of our heart. Jesus said that the Father wants “all” of our heart.

There was a point later on in my walk that the Lord corrected me for allowing part of my heart to gravitate towards something other than Him...

I am a big fan of football, and there was this particular kickoff weekend a few years ago when I spent almost all day watching games. That evening while I was taking a walk the Lord spoke the first part of Matthew 22:37 to my heart. When He did, He emphasized the word “all” in reference to loving Him with all my heart. What the Holy Spirit was communicating to me was- “Trey, you are not loving Me with all of your heart. You are allowing part of your heart to desire something other than me and that is a breach of my greatest commandment.”

Now please understand me- there is nothing wrong with watching football games or doing other things that are not necessarily “spiritual.” The problem occurs when our heart draws too close to the things of this world and the things of God are not our priority. He does not mind you having other things in your life. He just does not want these things having you (i.e. having part of your heart)!

You see, this is what happens in most believer's lives... They get born again and drop certain habits but after some time the Lord begins to deal with them about certain attitudes and idols in their lives and they are unwilling to put their “Isaacs” on the altar. This is one of the reasons the fire begins to wane and they quit experiencing the kind of grace that they had at the beginning.

## HOW TO DETERMINE THE HEART'S CONDITION

Most believers say that serving God whole-heartedly is the way they live their life. Many would say that they truly do love God with all of their heart, but if you indeed love God with all of your heart then it will be manifested in some rather obvious ways...

First of all, Jesus taught us that where our treasure is, there our heart would be also (Matthew 6:21). Our “treasure” is a way of describing what we do with our money. So one way of finding out the condition of our heart is to take an inventory of what we spend our money on. Do we put more of our resources into the kingdom of God than we do our own selfish desires? If we honestly had to say no to that question then that is one indication that God does not have all of our hearts.

Another way that we can tell what is in our heart is by what comes out of our mouth. Jesus said, “For out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.” (Luke 6:45) What (or who) do we talk about the most? If our answer was anything or anyone other than God then, according to Jesus, He is not in your heart in abundance. If we love to talk about anything or anyone more than God then that is an indication that God does not have all of our hearts.

In regards to loving God, do you know what Jesus said is the measuring stick of our love for God? He said it was how much we keep His commandments (John 14:21). If we love God then we will do what He says. So another indicator of loving God with all of our heart will be an extremely obedient lifestyle to His Word and His Spirit.

We should ask ourselves some questions like- What do I spend most of my time doing? What (or who) do I think about the most? Asking ourselves these kinds of questions will show us real quick what and who has our hearts.

Do you understand now how radical someone who loves God with all of his or her heart will be? They will be a Bible totin’, Scripture quotin’, offering givin’, Word doin’, child of God! And along with this, they will also be accused of being out of balance. They will be called a fanatic (among other things☺) But as Jesus said, “Beware when all men speak well of you!” If you are not running into the devil then you probably running with him! A Christian that loves God with all their heart will stand out from the crowd. They will not have to tell people they are a Christian either. Their lifestyle will be an overflow of the condition of their heart!

This whole-hearted, God-loving lifestyle is not a suggestion either. So many believers hear these things and say- "Well, it would be nice if we lived that way?"- thinking it is just a good idea. But God commands us all to love Him this way! It is not a suggestion. It is a commandment!

## PLAYING THE HARLOT

Do you know what God calls it when a believer just gives Him a portion of their heart? He calls it "playing the harlot!" (see Jeremiah 2:20-3:15, Ezekiel 16:15-41, etc.)

In these passages of Scripture that refer to "playing the harlot", idolatry is usually the issue. And although many of us do not believe that we have ever been guilty of idolatry because we have never bowed our knee worshiped a graven image, idolatry is much more subtle than that.

Actually the more blatant forms of idolatry that we see in the Old Testament are just types and shadows of what idolatry really is... For example, Paul calls "covetousness" idolatry in his letter to the Colossians. You see, an intense desire for anything more than God is considered idolatry in His sight. In His mind this is considered unfaithfulness!

Let's look at James chapter 4 to verify this... In verse four James says, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

This verse used to puzzle me because I did not understand why he called them adulterers and adulteresses in reference to befriending the world. Then the Lord revealed to me why. It was because when we give any part of our heart over to the things of the world God sees it like we are cheating on Him. As a matter of fact the words "adulterers and adulteresses" is an incorrect translation. The original manuscripts only have "adulteresses." Why is this so important? It is important because it shows that this verse is addressing the bride of Christ!

## THE MARRIAGE COVENANT

You see, we need to understand that our covenant relationship with God is like a marriage. We are called the bride of Christ and we have been made one spirit with our Groom- the Lord Jesus Christ.

In Ephesians chapter five we have Paul's call for husbands and wives to fulfill their responsibilities in marriage. But then at the end of him addressing the issues of marriage, he makes this statement- "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." What this statement means is that his teachings on the roles of a marriage covenant were really referring to our relationship with Christ.

You see, we have become engaged to the Lord Jesus through our confession of faith in Him and the Holy Spirit is our guarantee of that future marriage. We are positionally now in covenant with Him, but the day is coming when Jesus will return and the same thing that has happened in our spirit will take place in our body and we will be totally united with Him in marriage. Glory to God!

So when we allow part of our hearts to desire the things of this world we are committing adultery against our Lord and Husband! This is indeed as serious as it sounds!

The next verse in James says, "...The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealousy." God loves us with a godly-jealousy just as we love our significant other and would be jealous if they were flirting with someone other than us. He desires to possess all of our hearts so that we can have that relationship with Him that He desires and we were created for!

Just think about this a little... How would you feel if your significant other said to you, "Honey, I am going to continue to have relations with my last girlfriend/boyfriend but I still want to be married to you? How about I spend all day Sunday with you and then the rest of the week I'll spend with them?" Do you think that would be okay with you? Of course not! Many of you would say something like- "Look! It is either all of me or none of me...you decide!"

Well, thank God He is not like that. The Lord is faithful even when we are faithless! He will not immediately sever our relationship with Him because we occasionally run around on Him, but that does not mean we should continue breaking His heart, does it?

It would be considered perverted if we just let our spouse have a relationship with several other people and still called what we had with them a marriage. That would be abominable!

Well God desires the same... Jesus wants all of our hearts- not just a portion. He wants a monogamous relationship with us- that is, a whole-hearted devotion to Him.

So now that we have established the importance of loving God with all of our hearts, let's take a look at some of the heroes of the Bible and attempt to glean from their lives through their failures and virtues...

There is a common saying in my circles that God has not had anyone qualified working for Him yet! That is so true.

In our performance-based mentality today we feel like we have to be perfect before God will use us or bless us. We get part of that idea through our casual reading of the Scriptures. We read about the lives of Abraham, Moses, David, Paul, etc. and we see them as faultless. This is totally untrue! None of the saints of old were qualified. They all made mistakes and had imperfect characters. But as I said earlier, God is not looking for perfect people, He is looking for people with perfect hearts! And this is the common trait of all that were greatly used and blessed of God...

They had hearts that were completely following after Him! All of these men screwed up royally, but they all had that one common virtue... They were whole-heartedly sold out to the Lord!

So let's look at just a few examples...

## ABRAHAM

Abram was God's chosen vessel to cut a covenant with. When God called Abram out of his father's house in Ur of the Chaldeans, he was no spring chicken. Abram was a pagan worshipper!

It was not like Abram was serving the one true and living God and then one day He called Abram to leave. No! Abram was worshipping other gods and God- by His mercy and grace- saw into his heart and chose him to be the father of many nations.

Someone might argue and say, "Well, Abraham might have been a mess before he was saved but God forgives the things we do before we come to Him but afterwards He expects us to be holy!"

Well, even after God called Abram out of his home country he still was not perfect. On two different occasions Abram was not truthful to save his own neck by calling Sarai his sister. The amazing thing about one of those two accounts was that God actually rebuked the king for unknowingly taking another man's wife! In fact, the Lord told that king that Abram was a prophet and he would pray for him!

So what would cause God to be seemingly so biased in these two situations? What was it about Abram that made God look so favorably upon him?

It was what is taught throughout the New Testament...Abraham believed God! He was full of faith! You see, without faith it is impossible to please God. **Believing God is a fruit of a perfect heart!**

Someone might say, "Well I believe God and it seems like I don't have that kind of favor!"

I believe there are some serious misconceptions about what it means to believe God. James chapter two teaches us that faith without works is dead. James shows us through many different ways how faith does something. It actually goes on to use

Abraham as an example of this truth in explaining how he was willing to offer Isaac on the altar.

You see, when you really believe God you will have corresponding actions! There are no ifs, ands, or buts about it! If you really have faith you will have actions! And this is what Abraham had...FAITH- the genuine article!

His great faith in God caused him to...Number one, leave his family and country to go to a place that he knew not. Number two, continue to push on for years, even when things looked hopeless. Number three, trust the Lord's promise of a child even though Sarah and him were far too old. And, last but not least, Abraham was willing to offer Isaac to the Lord as a sacrifice. These, my friend, were the works of faith that James was talking about!

These few examples are proof positive that Abraham had a perfect heart. They prove that Abraham loved the Lord so much that He was not willing to consider what his circumstances were telling him. He believed God with all of his heart! He was willing to whole-heartedly serve God. If God told him to do something he stuck with it all the way through, no matter how hard it was, how bleak it looked, or how foolish it seemed. Abraham had a perfect heart and that is why God found him in Ur of the Chaldeans and called him out to build a great nation out of him.

“The eyes of the Lord go to and from through the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him.”

## JACOB

The next example I would like to use is the patriarch Jacob. His name meant “supplanter (or, deceitful).” And you all know the story of how Jacob stole his brother Esau's blessing fulfilling the essence of his name.

Well, the amazing thing about this is revealed later in the writings of the prophet Malachi when God is quoted as saying, “Jacob I have loved and Esau I have hated.

(Malachi 1:2) This passage of Scripture was written to show of God's divine electing love (see Romans 9:13).

So why would God chose to carry on the blessing of Abraham through the one who lied and deceived his brother? This would seem to be a mistake.

First of all, I believe the answer to that question is in understanding why God despised Esau? That answer is found in the book of Hebrews...In Hebrews 12:16 we are told, "lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright."

First of all, the Bible calls Esau a fornicator. This is probably a reference to the lust Esau had for Gentile women. Secondly, the word "profane" literally meant "godless." So we can see that Esau had some major problems but the problem I want to particularly take a look at is what is mentioned at the end of Hebrews 12:16... Esau sold his birthright for one morsel of food!

Do you see the difference between him and Jacob? Esau sold his birthright for something carnal and temporal but Jacob deceived to inherit something spiritual and eternal! Jacob might have been a deceiver but he had one redeeming virtue...He esteemed the things of God more than his brother! He saw the value of God's blessing, wherein his brother was living for today's pleasures. So although Jacob had some serious issues of his own God loved him and chose him to carry on the blessing of Abraham.

You see, the lesson we should learn from Jacob is that there is nothing in this world that can compare to the things of God. Esau lusted after the carnal things of this world and coveted what the Gentile's had to offer but Jacob valued and searched for the things of God like they were hidden treasures. He knew what was important! We need to get to the point where we will do anything to apprehend the blessings of God.

In regard to this, we can see how Jacob had a perfect heart.

He was a deceiver and he mistreated his brother, but he whole-heartedly sought after what was valuable and eternal. In other words, he honored the things of God. **A perfect heart honors (i.e. places a great value on) the things of God.**

And, again, when you truly honor the things of God it will be evidenced by your actions. It is easy to say you honor the things of God, but talk is cheap! Here are some examples of when you have placed a great value upon God...

You will do whatever it takes to read the Word! And you will read the Word, not because you feel it is your religious duty, but because you love it and know it is your daily bread! You will value your time spent with God more than your time spent doing anything else! Time spent with nothing else or no one else compares to spending time in the Almighty God's presence. To put it plainly, you will love the things of God more than the things of the world! This is what it means to truly honor God!

"The eyes of the Lord go to and from through the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him."

## DAVID

One of my favorite examples of someone who had a perfect heart is David. David is considered to be the greatest king that Israel has ever known. And no wonder because God said when choosing him to be the next king of Israel that he was choosing a man after His own heart and that would do all of His will. But although David was a great king and a prophet he was not perfect either... Now his victories certainly were greater than his mistakes but my point is to show how you can have a perfect heart and not be perfect.

We all know of the story of David and Bathsheeba- how David committed adultery with her and then murdered her husband Uriah to cover it up. This scandal was far worse than any sin that has been revealed in a minister of our generation. There is no comparison!

I mean to commit adultery and then murder the innocent husband...that is horrible! And this occurred through a man that walked in such integrity that at one time he refused twice to murder Saul who was unjustly trying to murder him. Evidently David had digressed considerably from where he walked before.

The amazing thing to me is how, in Hebrews chapter 11, God called David a man after His own heart! And this was after David had made this horrible mistake!

What was it in David that would make God overlook his imperfections and call him a man after His own heart?

I believe the answer is found in Psalm 27:4 when he wrote that if he could sum up everything that he truly desired and sought out it was to dwell in God's presence all the days of His life! This was what made David a man after God's heart...

He loved to be with God! David loved to worship and praise the Lord! He genuinely loved God and valued His presence!

This is what God saw in David! He saw a man that was whole-heartedly in love with Him and that is what caused Him to show Himself so strong through David's life. God had all of David's heart and although David got off the path that God had laid for Him, God looked beyond those mistakes. Sure, God took that child in punishing David for his sin but God restored Him back to the place that he once held.

"The eyes of the Lord go to and from through the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect towards Him."

## PETER

Last but not least, let's look at the life of one that I consider the greatest example of one who was imperfect yet had a perfect heart- Peter.

You have probably already heard preachers talk over and over about Peter being a carnal loud mouth. Yes, he did make many mistakes that are recorded in the Scriptures but what I want to do is study his life to find what Jesus saw in him.

I mean, Peter not only was called to be a disciple but he was also chosen to be the leader of all the disciples! Jesus must have seen more in him than most preachers do today.

First of all, as with all of Jesus' disciples, the fact that he would totally drop his business and leave his family at the mention of two words- "follow me"- is astounding to me.

How many of us are willing to leave all that we are comfortable and familiar with to follow the Lord? Not many are, but Peter was! He followed Jesus everywhere He went- serving and ministering on His behalf. Jesus had all of Peter's heart- which was evidenced by Him having all of Peter's life!

Many forget how Peter acted so bravely in the Garden of Gethsemane when he cut off the ear of the high priest's servant Malchus. Sure, Jesus rebuked him for his wrong reaction to what was going on but look at how sold out he was to the cause of Christ! This shows us how much he really loved Jesus!

What about Post-Pentecost Peter? After he was baptized in the Holy Spirit he preached boldly, totally disregarding the threats of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. He was passionate about what he believed and he did not regard his own life! Peter was whole-heartedly sold out to the cause of Christ!

So what was it that God saw in Peter? Peter most definitely had a heart for the Lord! He did not have it altogether naturally speaking, but he had a heart to follow the Lord and was totally committed to His cause.

So what did all these men have in common? They were full of faith! They were totally committed to God's purpose! They placed a great value on the things of God! They loved God more than anyone else! They were **disciples!**

You see, in each one of these four examples, these men were sought out by God... God's search for someone to manifest His glory through ended in the lives of each of these men! And He most certainly did show Himself strong in their lives. They were not perfect. They had their share of blunders and flaws. But God saw into their hearts and blessed them exceedingly! And He'll do the same for you.

## THE PERFECT MASTERPIECE

You see, God understands that we have a flesh nature that has sin and rebellion engrained in it! Let's look over at Psalm 103 and see how God deals with us when we make those mistakes...

Psalm 103:11-14 says, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us. As a father pities his children, So the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust."

Notice first that verse 11 is referring to those that fear God. What does it mean to fear God? This does not mean to be afraid of God but simply to revere and honor Him. If fearing God meant a total absence of problems then why would we need mercy? No, fearing God does not describe perfection but rather it describes a heart issue! And this verse teaches us that if we honor the Lord in our hearts then His mercy is as great and high as the heavens are above the earth! What that shows us then is how these great men of God received the grace that they did in spite of their mistakes...they all feared the Lord. They were willing and obedient even though they were not perfect. They had hearts that were fully devoted to Him!

Notice what verse 13 goes on to say... "As a father pities (or, has compassion on) his children, So the Lord pities (or, has compassion on) those who fear Him." Again, this verse is referring to those that fear Him. When we fear Him (or, revere Him in our hearts), He will have great compassion on us just like a parent does on their child. So why does a parent show compassion on their child? They mainly do because they love them, but also they can be compassionate because they have been a child before too.

You see, compassion and sympathy have to do with having experienced or currently experiencing what the other person is going through. And a parent will either treat their child the way they were treated or they will treat their child the way they wish they were treated based on that sympathy. So how could God be so compassionate with us? Like I have already said, Jesus was tempted in all points that we are so He can sympathize with us.

This is what verse 14 goes on to say- "For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust." What part of our three part being (i.e. spirit, soul, and body) was created from the dust of the ground in the Garden? Our body, of course! So this verse is saying that God remembers that our flesh was made from a weak and fragile substance. This is why Paul referred to our bodies as "earthen vessels" (2 Corinthians 4:7).

Now look back to the beginning of this verse and notice what else David uses to describe our body. He calls it our "frame." Why does he refer to our body as a "frame"? A frame is what holds and displays a picture! So in our case the frame would be our body and the artwork would be our inner man! So let me ask you a question...When you put a picture up on your wall, what do you pay the most attention to, the frame or the picture inside of the frame? Of course, your answer will be- what is in the frame. Well, that is what God looks at in us!

He is not focused on our weak and tattered frames; He is looking at the artwork inside of the frame! In other words, God is not too concerned with the frailties of our flesh; He is more concerned with the condition of our hearts. And when God gets your whole heart- when you love, honor, and trust Him with all of your heart- then He sees you as a masterpiece and extremely valuable!

But, on the other hand, when your heart is divided and impure, it does not matter how great you get your "frame" looking, you will not be acceptable to display on His wall. For example, look at the religious leaders of Jesus' day (and everyday, for that matter). They honored God with their lips, religious duties, etc. but their hearts were far from Him. They had it going on in these external things but they were full of wickedness. These are the only ones Jesus ever rebuked! You will not be displayed

with these others that God displayed in His Hall of Fame (i.e. Hebrews chapter 11) if your heart is not right. Only those who give God their whole heart and fulfill the first principle of the greatest commandment are worthy to be listed among God's generals in Hebrews chapter 11!

Do you see the importance of having a good and noble heart? Jesus said that when your heart is in this condition that you are capable of producing a hundredfold in your life (see Luke 8:15)! And that is what these great men and women of God did. They gave God all of their hearts and as a result God has bragged on them for 2000 years and rewarded them richly in both their lives on earth and their lives in heaven! Amen!