

UNDER THE DIVINE SEARCHLIGHT

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-24.

One day something told David in his innermost heart that there was at his side Someone whom he could not see, but Who was thinking about him, looking at him and brooding over him. Realizing that this Person was the ever-present and all--knowing God, and that he was then under His great searchlight, David asked God for a divine diagnosis. Personally, definitely and earnestly David prayed: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." That is the prayer of a true servant of God.

David knew that the prophet spoke the truth when he said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." He realized that he did not know what powers or capabilities for good or evil he had. However, he was sure that God had perfect knowledge of him. He was as certain of that fact as he was of his own existence. He was sure that God could and would search him fully, fairly and impartially. He was anxious to know what God thought of him. Since God had a perfect knowledge of him, he asked for a divine diagnosis. By diagnosis is meant the determination of the distinctive nature of a disease. Knowing that he was not all that he should have been, David earnestly requested that he be brought under the divine searchlight and then given the right diagnosis.

This prayer is the yearning of a devout soul. It should be the prayer of every child of God. You do not have to travel very far to find out the need for such a prayer. You have but to look within, to consider the thoughts, the motives, the desires and the purposes which are continually working within your own heart, to discover the need for such a prayer as this.

I. The Heart.

"Search me, O God, and know my heart." That word "search" has two meanings, one of which is disagreeable and the other is delightful; one signifying the law and the other signifying love. A man knocks at your door, or rings your doorbell. He has an official signature and seal at the bottom of the paper in his hand, giving that man the full power of the municipality, county or state to enter your house and go through all of your belongings. That is a search warrant. In such a case you have the law meaning of the word "search", and it is one which is not liked by anyone. As an example of the love meaning of the word "search", there is the case of the young person who has been away from home for some months and then returns, whereupon the eyes of the loving parents search the face of the child to see if he or she has been contaminated or hurt during the absence.

Years ago a professor of philosophy and psychology in Harvard University gave his students this incident out of life in New England. Far back in the country was a schoolhouse, and in that little brick building a group of children were gathered for a lesson in fractions. To one of the boys the teacher said, "Tommy, your mother is dividing a pie for your family at home. There is George, John, Mary, Sally, your father, your mother and yourself, or seven altogether. How much would each of you get?" The little boy drawled out, "One sixth." The teacher's

brow knit, and her voice was rather peevish as she said: "Tommy, don't you know better than that? Have I been teaching you fractions so long, and you can't answer that simple question?" She repeated the question again, adding, "Don't you know fractions?" But Tommy was not to be budged by the teacher's petulance, and he answered: "Yes'm I know fractions some, and I know mother; and she'd say she didn't want any." Now the teacher was quite right, and the law of mathematics remained unchanged, but the personal equation had changed the law of mathematics in its application to that little boy's stomach. He knew his mother. He knew that when the whole pie transaction was concluded he would have more than a seventh of it resting under his waist line, and that because of the love in the heart of his mother.

This request implies a consciousness of sincerity. The picturesque word "search" means to dig deep. The Psalmist wanted a thorough examination of himself. He was not afraid of God's knowledge of him. Penetrated with a sense of sinfulness, he wanted God to search his heart. He was not afraid of divine scrutiny because his heart was set upon being right with God. This matter of being right with God is of supreme importance in every life. Let God search your heart, your character and your life. With the Psalmist say, "Search me" -- dig into me and bring the deep-lying parts to light. "Know my heart", which is the center of my personality, my inmost self.

The heart is the center of the physical life, for the life of the body is in the blood with which the heart has so much to do. When disease gets into the blood stream life is threatened. Moreover, when sin gets into the heart the spiritual life is endangered. Problems of life begin in the heart. Purposes of life are formed in the heart. Therefore, it is no wonder that God's Word says, "My son, give me thine heart" (Proverbs 23:26). Our troubles in our lives, our homes and our churches are heart troubles first. Are you ready for the scrutiny and diagnosis of the Divine Surgeon?

David was willing to know the worst about himself. Men generally are afraid to know themselves. If one thinks that his child is in danger from serious disease, he asks to know the worst. But not so with his soul. He tries to forget that.

The majority of Christians are living far below their privileges. This may be due to a lack of knowledge or a lack of faith. As a consequence there is strain, difficulty and friction in their lives. They are conscious of a lack of power, so there is discouragement and exhaustion and gloom in their experience. Their hearts are perpetually condemning them, and their lips are closed when they ought to be witnessing to others. Then there follows worldly conformity instead of Christian consistency.

It is good when a person is willing for God to search his heart. Are you honest enough to let God search your heart with reference to His Word? How much time do you give to the Bible, compared with the newspapers or magazines? How much time did you give to the study of the Bible last week? Have you neglected the Book? How is it with you in regard to the important work of introducing people to Christ?

What are some of the things which hinder the work of God in the lives of Christians?

One thing is hidden or unconfessed sin. Nobody can expect power with God until his sin has been forgiven and put away. One person may be the cause of the powerlessness of a church. You will remember that on one occasion the people of God had crossed the river, had gone against Jericho and won the battle, and, to their surprise, when they went up against a little insignificant place called Ai they were defeated by a mere handful of men. Joshua was discouraged, so he went before the Lord and asked for an explanation of their shameful failure. God told him that sin was in the camp, and because of this the people of Israel were without power. Only one man had sinned, but his sin prevented the thousands from winning the victory. No man can have power with God while unconfessed sin is in his heart and life.

Another thing which hinders the work of God is a spirit of unwillingness to be where God can use us. We want to go to certain fields and do certain kinds of work, so we believe that this is the will of God for us.

Still another thing which is keeping many from being used of God is the fact that they are cherishing bitter feelings against others. How sad and tragic when anybody who claims to be a follower of Christ cherishes evil feelings against somebody for either fancied or real wrongs! Christ taught and emphasized that a person who has a heart filled with bitterness cannot have fellowship with Him or be used by Him.

Still others are powerless in work for the Lord because of their indifference toward the lost. The matter of winning the lost to Christ is of no concern to them. If there is any one thing that causes the Lord to be grieved and the angels to weep, it is the fact that the people to whom He has entrusted the work of winning the lost to Christ are completely indifferent to the condition of those who are perishing without Christ. When such a believer appears before the judgment seat of Christ he will yearn for the opportunity of living again, but that will be impossible.

II. The Thoughts.

"Try me, and know my thoughts." The difference between "heart" and "thoughts" is that one is the workshop and the other is the product. The heart is the place where the thoughts are produced. Divine diagnosis calls for tested thoughts, as well as a searched heart. Because our thoughts are hidden from the eyes of men, even from our most trusted friends, we often trifle with our thoughts and deceive ourselves about them. God is very much concerned about our thoughts, all of which are fully known to Him.

To convince you that our thoughts are important, I need only to remind you that the wise man said, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." A man is as his thoughts. Many professing Christians cherish the notion that they do not have any control over the suggestions that are made to their minds, and that they are not responsible for the contents of their thoughts.

If one will only look within and consider his own thoughts, motives, desires and purposes, he will see the need for making this beautiful prayer his very own.

III. The Way.

"And see if there by any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." This request of David implied his desire for freedom from evil. If any evil tendency or way had escaped his scrutiny, he knew that it could not escape detection under the divine searchlight. When God discovered and revealed that wicked way, the Psalmist wanted to be delivered from it because he considered such a way to be one of injury, pain and grief.

David reasoned like this, "If there is in me, anything erroneous to correct, anything injurious to remove, anything impure to cleanse, reveal it to me and enable me to get rid of it." He did not want to let anything remain in him that was debasing to himself, injurious to others or repulsive to God. He wanted God to show him the evil that was in his heart and life in order that he might eliminate it. He was resolved to turn from the evil way as soon as God told him what it was.

Divine diagnosis always guarantees revealed reality. In observing the sins of others, we often deceive ourselves about our own sins. Of others we say, "How can a Christian do such a thing?" In so doing we frequently excuse ourselves for doing something just as wrong, and maybe more so.

David expressed his conscious need of direction in his request for divine guidance in the way of righteousness. He said, "Lead me in the way everlasting." He wanted to walk in God's way. He knew that was the only way that would bring the blessings into his heart and life which would make him equal to every emergency that might arise.

If you should go to Milan, Italy, as a tourist, a guide would take you to see the splendid Cremona violin that Paganini played. You would admire its beautiful color and perfect shape. But it is locked behind a glass case, perfectly useless, though it was a valuable instrument in the hands of a master. You may be entrenched behind some prejudice or some reluctance to give up some sin. If you will only surrender that sin and fully yield your life to the Lord, it will be a great experience for you and He will bring wonderful music out of your life. Satan, self or the Saviour will lead you. Which shall it be?