

A DIVIDED HEART

"Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."
Psalm 86:11.

This is a short but comprehensive prayer of a heartbroken penitent who was yearning for God's forgiveness. Stricken with a sense of his own sinfulness and an overwhelming sense of need, the psalmist cried out to God, asking Him to take note of his need and have mercy upon his guilty soul. Even though this prayer was uttered a long time ago, it is appropriate still.

The psalmist had not been ignorant of the divine precepts, or of God's holy requirements, but he had failed to render a complete obedience. He had surrendered to the momentary dictates of inclination and desire. There was a lack of unified purpose, as well as a singleness of aim, but he had come to realize the discord and tragedy of a divided heart. He felt the weight of chance desires, and saw the shame into which they had plunged him. Longing to be delivered from the futility and misery of the divided heart, he prayed, "Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name."

That was the cry of a man who knew how unhappy, unhealthy and unfruitful is the life that issues from a divided heart. Such a person is the man of double mind--partly for Christ, partly for self. He is the man of double will--partly surrendered, partly reserved. He is the man of double loyalty--partly to the kingdom of God, partly to the kingdom of this world. Such a man pleases neither himself nor the Lord. More than that, such a man is not likely to remain just where he is. Sooner or later, he will go all-out for God or all-out for the world. Such a man had better pray with the psalmist, "Unite my heart to fear thy name."

I. The Condition.

A divided heart is something from which all suffer. No heart among us is absolutely single, or devoted entirely to God. So many of us are living echoes of Paul's words in Romans seven: "The good that I would, I do not. The evil that I would not, that I do." What a pity that we have not come to the place to which Paul came when he cried, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death?" Recognizing that this matter of a dual personality is a fact of experience, Paul referred to the "new man" and the "old man." In another passage he called them "the spirit" and "the flesh."

Frequently somebody says, "I know what I ought to do, but I am not sure that I want to do it." That implies a divided heart, and therefore an impotent personality. Another says, "I want to do it, but I don't want to enough to get it done, not enough to say 'Yes' to God." A divided heart is the explanation.

"Unite my heart" is no obsolete prayer. Rather, it is a prayer that exactly meets our case. It expresses perfectly our deepest and most urgent need. Behind the psalmist's prayer was the recognition that his heart was not one. It was not single, but double. It was the prayer of a man who was conscious of inward strife. Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the flesh and the spirit, the new man and the old man were struggling in his soul.

There is here a recognition of the truth that men ought to love God with all the heart, mind and strength. It is a sad fact that men do not so love God. Their hearts are distracted, their affections are set upon various objects; therefore, the prayer is that they may all be gathered in and united in loving and fearing God. The

Apostle James reminded us that "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."

The self that Christ is seeking to produce is a unified whole. It is not now a fully grown self, but it should be, and can be, a surrendered self. There is an ambitious self that just will not wait humbly on God for Him to reveal His plan for our lives and to define success for us as He wants to define it. It clamors for human applause, craves this world's goods, and would justify the use of shady methods to gain a coveted goal. There are tight places in the Christian life where so many try to serve Christ and have their own way at the same time: giving way to the fear of other people's opinions, taking things in their own hands so as to insure the realization of some personal ambition. All of us Christians must choose which pain we want to suffer: the pain of a crucified self, or the pain of a divided mind.

II. The Consequences.

1. Lack of perception.

It is good to pray, "Lord, teach me thy way," but it is better to say, "Unite my heart, and bring this inner confusion to an end." Some people sing hymns of dedication at the top of their voices, but at the bottom of their hearts there are locked doors of reservation. Then they wonder why no more light comes to them on their daily problems. Christ said, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If thine eye be single," that is, focused on one object--God--then thy whole being will be flooded with His light. If you want God's will to be unfolded to you, you must be wholehearted in your desire for it and your willingness to embrace it. If you want your mind enlightened with God's Word, you must make sure that your heart is not at cross-purposes with that Word. To see truth clearly, you must be surrendered to it utterly.

"Teach me thy way, O Lord." This is simply another way of saying, make my sense of right and wrong clear and definite. Suffer me not to grope in moral confusion. Train me in a fine discernment of moral values. God has a "way" for man. Of this "way" man is ignorant until God teaches him. "Teach me thy way" indicates that there is a message to be heard.

2. Lack of power.

Listen to the psalmist saying, "I will walk in thy truth." Obedience is the natural response to grace. "Walk" as used in the Scriptures signifies our practical living. In their Christian professions some people really "walk" for Christ, and others just wobble. The outer wobble is always the sign of an inner weakness--a divided heart. As James said, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." God sees his double mindedness, but the rest of us see the instability of his ways.

In World War I the Allies tried the method of multiple control in the handling of their armies. It failed. Then they made Foch the generalissimo of all the forces, and they got somewhere. In World War II it was decided early that invasion of Europe could be carried through successfully if, and only if, someone was placed in supreme command. That position was given to General Eisenhower. Had that sort of thing not been done the confusion would have been terrible, due to all the frictions, vacillations, hesitations and indecisions that invariably grow out of multiple or divided control.

This principle holds good on the personal battlefield of your life and mine. Who is to have our unmixed and undistracted loyalty--Christ or Caesar? Pilate's soul was a battleground that tragic night long ago. He was for Jesus, but not altogether. When they whispered in his ear, "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend," he was a frightfully divided man. His wife sent a message in haste, urging him not to do anything to harm this just Man, Jesus. It was a trying

hour, of course. But, if he had not been a man of divided heart, the decision would have been simple. It might have been costly, but it would have been simple. As a result, Pontius Pilate, a man under dual control, has gone down in history as the evil prince of vacillators and weaklings. Behind him trails the undying testimony that a divided heart lacks power—power to do the will of God, and power to walk in the way of truth.

3. Lack of praise.

You will note that only after the psalmist has prayed, "Unite my heart," does he say, "I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart." The first is necessary to the second. Lack the one and you fail of the other. Light, strength and joy are missing where the empire of ourselves is under a divided kingdom.

If you can truly say, "Christ is all and in all to me," your days, whatever their shadows, will "flow in endless praise." The hymn "My Jesus, As Thou Wilt," was written by a German minister and pastor, Schmolke, who composed it as an offering of holy adoration in the midst of the most desolate circumstances. A fire had swept over most of his parish, destroyed his church and the homes of nearly all his people. A little later death took away both his wife and his daughter. Then paralysis struck him and he was laid upon a bed of immovable quiet. In this condition his eyesight began to fail him. Yet there, with his parish devoured by flames, blindness creeping into his eyes, bereft of wife and daughter, held fast to a bed of pain, he wrote:

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
Oh, let Thy will be mine;
Into Thy hand of love
My all I now resign.
Through sorrow or through joy,
Conduct me as Thine own,
And help me still to say,
My Lord, Thy will be done.

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
Though seen through many a tear,
Let not my star of hope
Grow dim or disappear.
Since Thou so oft hast wept
And sorrowed all alone,
If I must weep with Thee,
My Lord, Thy will be done.

"My Jesus, as Thou wilt,
All shall be well with me;
Each changing future scene
I gladly trust to Thee.
Straight to my home above,
I travel calmly on;
And say in life and death,
My Lord, Thy will be done."

All down the course of history every great and noble life has been marked by a unified purpose. No voice could allure, no suffering could frighten and no bribe could tempt such people. Their purpose clothed them with a courage that was dauntless. They saw what needed to be done and they did it.

A divided heart dooms a person to ineffectiveness. We have been told that "Out of the heart are the issues of life," but when the heart is divided and discordant

the life that issues from it cannot be strong, positive and aggressive. To achieve anything great, a worthy purpose must control us. To be eminently successful in any pursuit a man's heart must be in it. A half-hearted man is a failure anywhere and everywhere. The secret of success is that men put their whole being--heart, soul, mind and strength--into their work, and under God they succeed.

A divided heart is treating God in an unworthy manner. He will not share the dominion. He is intolerant of a rival. He demands to be served with every part of the nature. It is not the affections and emotions alone that He wants. He wants the intellect as well as the heart and soul. He also wants the will. He asks to be served with all the heart, all the soul, all the mind and all the strength.

III. The Cure.

Do you want the strife within your soul to be ended? Do you really long for release from this confusion of mixed motives, and double purposes and crossed-up desires? Do you desire a unified command over the empire of your personality? If so, there are certain necessary steps to be taken.

1. Confess your condition.

It has been said that "The most courageous hour in any man's life is the hour in which he honestly faces himself." The clash has been there, deep within your soul, so admit it frankly and humbly. Your eye has not been single. You have looked God's way, but there has always been a side-glance toward yourself also. You have consented to go along with God's will when it has not been too inconvenient. At other times you have gone your own way, so confess it.

2. Call on the Lord.

That is exactly what the psalmist did. "Unite my heart to fear thy name" is a prayer. The Hebrew word which is translated "unite" means to "make one." Its root is a word which means one, yet never does it mean one alone, but always a composite unit. In other words it is a blending, a coming together, a fusion.

The only real blending of which the soul is capable is the blending with God. We were made for harmony and communion with Him. The Lord Jesus came and became our crucified Saviour in order that He might restore us to harmony with God. We should turn to the Lord and say, "Master, Thou art the only One to Whom I can give myself without reserve, and find thereby the release, the peace, the harmony and the victory for which I long."

3. Commit yourself to the Lord.

Unreservedly, yield your all to Christ. Just turn your case over completely to Him and He will supply your needs. He will see to it that sufficient resources are available when your need arises.