

Head Versus Heart

by Roger Day

You may have heard many messages about hearers versus doers. This topic is found in James chapter 1, Romans chapter 2, and elsewhere. The doers are justified, right? Yet, 1 Corinthians chapter 13 clues us in that our motivation is key to the doing. Likewise, Matthew 7:21-23 tells us that there will be doers that are cast out.

Salvation and spiritual health is not some simple formula of acquiring the knowledge of do's and don't's, and then just going through the right motions. It is about the condition of your heart. What is your orientation? Is it similar to God? Do you aspire to God's character traits? Do you fervently seek to be in harmony with God? Do you love what God loves and hate what God hates? Some say love is a feeling. Others say love is an action. Perhaps it is the combination of both, because love should be what motivates one to action. If you have love, you will be a doer of the right kind.

God can tell a lot about us by our behavior, by the fruits of our conduct, and how we spend our time. But he really gets to know us through prayer. You'll recall that those that are cast out in the parables and other teachings of Christ are told to depart along with this phrase, "I never knew you." This doesn't mean God didn't know who they were or didn't know their name. It means He really never knew them on a personal basis. He did of course know that they lacked sufficient motivation to develop a personal relationship with Him. Otherwise, God would know them – both the Father to whom one prays, and the Son, who hears all our prayers as High Priest (and whom we may also directly address in our prayers).

We are told to cast all our cares upon Him. That is how we confirm what is in our heart. Sure, God knows what we need before we ask, but God would like to know what is on our minds and hearts. God would like to hear our take on our situation and our take on the needs of others, presuming we pray about others as well. Hopefully, we will want to pray for others before bringing up our personal troubles. Of course our bright ideas and what we really need may be very different things. So it is always best to ask for God's wise will to be done regardless. Truly Father knows best.

Some say there is no commandment to pray. But there really is. It is the first commandment. If God is first with you, you will pray. Christ gave us an example. He prayed to His Father, and explained how we should pray. The general instruction and format is found in Matthew 6:5-15. And James 5:16 tells us, "Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

If you do not have a daily, passionate, open-hearted relationship with God in prayer, you are lacking a crucial prerequisite for salvation. The Christian life begins with repentance and baptism. But that is only the beginning. The Greek word for conversion (epistrepho) means to turn about or turn again and is essentially synonymous with repentance. To be converted is to be in a continual state of repentance as one makes adjustments to stay on the narrow path, and seeks to make real progress.

We must continually identify and cast off our shortcomings, while striving for better character traits. And this is not simply a self-examination process. It also requires our participation in life. One cannot be a Christian in a vacuum. If you have love – if your heart is healthy - you will exercise it by serving and caring for others. Your heart, not your head, is the key to your salvation.