

# THE TRUE HEART

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MAN'S HEART, BY NATURE, IS NOT TRUE. It is neither true to himself nor to God. In some respects it may be said to be true to himself and his fellow men, when it is true to his own interests and true to his usual character, or when it is true to the friendships and affections of earth. In the last of these respects we often hear of the heart's truth. We hear how truly hearts beat in affection for each other. We hear of friends being true to friends, so as to maintain their mutual constancy unshaken amid distance, suffering, and peril. But in all this, how seldom is it that we hear of hearts that are true to God and to Christ.

What is a true heart? It is not a perfect heart, for where is that to be found on earth? It is not a heart where sin has no place at all, and where all is holy and spiritual, for who, save the spirits of the just made perfect, have reached this stature? It is not a heart that never wavers, never saddens, never droops, never languishes, never grows cold, for that we must seek a brighter world and a more genial clime.

A true heart is one that has ceased to misunderstand and mistrust the character of God, that takes that character simply as it is revealed in grace, and rests where God would have the sinner to rest, on His forgiving love. A true heart is one that has ceased to suspect God or to look upon Him as an austere and hard master. The trueness of the heart consists in its right apprehensions of the character of God; in "knowing the Father" as He has made Himself known to sinners in Christ Jesus. To be true to God is to know Him as the gracious One, as the pardoning One, as the sin-hating, yet sinner-loving God. He who has not yet seen enough of Him in the Cross, as to dispel all his wicked doubts and guilty fears, is not yet true to God.

A false heart is one which does not know the Father. Its views of God's character are distorted and dim. It seeks, in self-righteousness, to do something or feel something which may draw towards it the favor of God, and it cannot rest or trust without finding this. It does not understand the entire freeness of the grace revealed in Jesus, and will not believe that this grace is so free and wide as to meet it, even as it is, without one particle of good about it either in feeling or in action. It suspects God, because it is not satisfied with itself. It thinks it right to cherish doubts and fears, nay, and it thinks it wrong to have confidence so long as there is so much of evil and so little of good about itself. All this is being false-hearted to God. It looks like humility, but it is pride. It looks like dissatisfaction with self, but it is just a trying to get something in self to be satisfied with. It looks like a sense of unworthiness, but it is just self-righteousness, and a refusal to be content to be so altogether unworthy, as to be indebted for entire salvation to a grace that has to do with none but the unworthy.

Some may think that though we may call this false-heartedness to God, it is at least being true to His holiness and true to His law, for it is a dread of these that produces this despondency and keeps the soul from rest. But this is not even being true to His holiness, for it is supposing that God's holiness is at variance with His grace, and that we best magnify His holiness by distrusting His grace. And is not this being false to God—false to His holiness as much as to His grace? Is it not just saying, that God has taken so little care to guard His holiness that it is necessary for the sinner to do something for this end, and that the best way to do this is just to continue doubting until evidences of being holy can be discovered in the soul. But God has taken care of His own holiness and has not left it to us to do this. He has so fully provided for it in the gospel, that, the more we trust His grace, the more we honor His holiness, while, on the other hand, by distrusting His grace, we refuse to give to His holiness the honor that is its due.

What, then, is the cure of false-heartedness? How is a true heart to be found? I need not say that all must come from the Holy Spirit. The same mighty power that wrought in Christ, when He was raised from the dead, must be put forth towards us. But how does the Holy Spirit produce this true heart? What is that He shows us which removes our falseness of heart and makes it true? How does God set hearts right with Himself?

God does all this by showing us what He really is. He shows us how much we have mistaken His character and how little we have done justice to His love. He shows us that He is not what our false hearts have supposed Him to be. We have sadly misjudged Him, and imagined Him to be such an one as we ourselves, that will give only as He gets and loves only as He is loved in return. Now, the Holy Spirit withdraws the veil and reveals the gracious countenance of God. He shows us how much we have wronged Him, how little we have understood either the freeness or the largeness of His grace, and then it is that the suspicions of our false hearts give way; then, instead of standing afar off, we draw nigh; then, instead of cherishing fears and doubts because of our sinfulness, we lay all these aside, seeing that, since God has not made these a reason for not loving us, we should not make them a reason for doubting that love. When thus we get "acquainted with God," we are at peace. We feel that nothing more is needed, for producing perfect peace, but this acquaintanceship with God in His true character. It was our not knowing Him that filled us with trouble, and it is our knowing Him that fills us with peace. The knowledge of the Father is the sunshine of Heaven to our benighted souls. Thus our false-heartedness is removed, and we become true to God, and true to Christ. It is what we see in them that makes us true to them. When we see them as they are, trueness of heart springs up unbidden. We find the resting place sufficient, and so we rest.

But do not our sins rob us of this? Perhaps, in point of fact, they often do, but, most assuredly, they ought not. For what amount of sin in us can make God less an object to be trusted? Can any sin that we have committed make it right for us to be untrue to God, untrue to

Christ? Is one sin to be the ground for our committing another? Are we to be false to Jesus because sin has been found upon us? Dare any of us say it is right to be false to Jesus, because we have been guilty of sin? Ought we not rather to say, we have certainly transgressed, but still we dare not add to the guilt of these transgressions, the still greater sin of being false to Jesus. No degree of sin in us can make Him less the sinner's Savior and the sinner's Friend. Nothing can alter His character of grace, or render less efficacious His infinitely precious blood. Should the consciousness of sin, then, make us false to Jesus? Was it the knowledge that we were not sinners that first made us true to Him? No it was not. In the full view and sense of all our guilt, we were drawn to Him, because He was altogether such an one as a sinner might lean upon. And how, then, can the fuller discovery of our guilt make us lean upon Him less, or make us think it necessary to be untrue to Him? Has He deserved this at our hands?

The knowledge of immediate and complete forgiveness, through the belief of the gospel, is that which alone can give us true hearts. An imperfect knowledge of this keeps us untrue. A doubtful pardon, uncertainty as to our acceptance with God, cannot make us true. A gospel which brings us merely the hope of pardon, which makes reconciliation with God a future and distant privilege, cannot deliver us from the natural falseness of our hearts. But a gospel that assures us of God's gracious mind towards sinners, and tells us of sin put away by the sacrifice of God's own Son, does surely proclaim enough to disarm our dread, to allay our suspicion, and to inspire us at once with the most childlike confidence. A gospel that tells us how true Jesus has been to us is the only gospel that can make us true to Him. Anything which would awaken in us the very slightest doubt of His grace and love, tends to make us false to Him. And surely He has been true to us whatever we have been to Him. He was true to us when He said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will O God." He was true to us, when, in the fullness of time, He was made flesh and dwelt among us. He was true to us, when, during three and thirty years, He sojourned below in this world of sin, seeking the lost, and gathering those who, like sheep had gone astray. He was true to us when He went into the garden of Gethsemane and drank the bitter cup. He was true to us when He endured the cruel mocking and scourging and spitting, and when He allowed the hands of wicked men to place upon His head the crown of thorns. He was true to us when He died and when He went down into the grave, when He rose again, and when He ascended on high leading captivity captive. He is true to us now in heaven, as true as He was on earth, for He ever liveth to make intercession for us. If, then, He has been so true to us, how can we be false to Him?

Look at Jesus, believers, and that will keep you true to Him! Look at Jesus, sinners, and the sight of what He is and what He has done will make you ashamed of that false heart of yours. It will make you ashamed of your doubts, ashamed of your treachery, ashamed of your unkindness, ashamed of your unbelief, and make you fall at His feet, saying, MY LORD AND MY GOD! Looking at yourself may make you afraid to trust, but looking at Him will make you afraid and

ashamed to distrust. Looking unto Jesus is the cure for a false heart, and the only way for producing a true one.