

The Open Heart

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The “heart” of man in the Bible is often used interchangeably with the “mind” of man. The beauty and virtue of the open heart/mind are often extolled in Scripture. In Jesus’ Parable of the Sower he taught that the fruitful heart is that which is “honest and good” (Luke 8:15). It was just such “soil” that resided in the 3,000 on Pentecost who “gladly received the word” (Acts 2:41). By Paul’s preaching of the Gospel, the Lord opened the heart of Lydia (Acts 16:14). The Berean Jews were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they “received the word with all readiness of mind” (Acts 17:11). Paul pleaded with the Corinthians: “Open your hearts to us” (2 Cor. 7:2, ASV).

On the other hand, the closed heart/mind is ever proscribed in God’s Word. The Lord applied the condemnation of a “gross heart” in Isaiah 6:9-10 to the people of His day (Mat. 13:15). The apostles did not understand the Lord on one occasion because “their heart was hardened” (Mark 6:52). The Jews did not understand the types and prophecies of the law concerning Christ because “their minds were blinded” (2 Cor. 3:14). Time after time, the Jews who were reverting to the law of Moses were warned, “harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:8, 15; 4:7).

Why is it so virtuous to have an open heart and so dangerous to have a gross or hardened heart?

1. The honest and open heart is free from prejudice. It will give evidence a fair hearing. This is what the Bereans did. Because of their “readiness of mind” they “searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11).
2. The open heart will not only hear the Truth of God’s Word, but will act upon it. The “honest and good heart” produces good fruit in its obedience (Luke 8:15). When Lydia’s heart was opened, she did the things commanded by Paul, including being baptized into Christ (Acts 16:14-15).
3. The open heart is searching for the Truth of God’s Word, which alone can make one free from sin (John 8:31-32). Such a heart “gladly receives the Word” (Acts 2:41).

4. The closed mind struggles along in the blindness of self-imposed ignorance and in the spiritual trap of self-excused sin and error. Thus, the Jews generally had so closed their minds to any kind of king and kingdom other than an earthly one that they ruled out Jesus as the Christ.

Let none confuse “open-mindedness” with lack of conviction or doctrinal instability. (Eph. 4:14). The person who is “ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7) is to be not “open-minded,” but “empty-minded”!

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