

John 14 – Jesus Knows Our Hearts

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Scripture 1: (Jer. 17:9-11 ESV)

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

"I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

Like the partridge that gathers a brood that she did not hatch, so is he who gets riches but not by justice; in the midst of his days they will leave him, and at his end he will be a fool.

Scripture 2: (Jn. 2:23-25 ESV)

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing. But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Appendix: (Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion; 3.12.8)

In regard to the origin of idols, the statement contained in the Book of Wisdom has been received with almost universal consent—viz. that they originated with those who bestowed this honour on the dead, from a superstitious regard to their memory. I admit that this perverse practice is of very high antiquity, and I deny not that it was a kind of torch by which the infatuated proneness of mankind to idolatry was kindled into a greater blaze. I do not, however, admit that it was the first origin of the practice. That idols were in use before the prevalence of that ambitious consecration of the images of the dead, frequently adverted to by profane writers, is evident from the words of Moses ([Gen. 31:19](#)). When he relates that Rachel stole her father's images, he speaks of the use of idols as a common vice. **Hence we may infer, that the human mind is, so to speak, a perpetual forge of idols.** There was a kind of renewal of the world at the deluge, but before many years elapse, men are forging gods at will. There is reason to believe, that in the holy Patriarch's lifetime his grandchildren were given to idolatry: so that he must with his own eyes, not without the deepest grief, have seen the earth polluted with idols—that earth whose iniquities God had lately purged with so fearful a Judgment. For Joshua testifies ([Josh. 24:2](#)), that Torah and Nachor, even before the birth of Abraham, were the worshipers of false gods. The progeny of Shem having so speedily revolted, what are we to think of the posterity of Ham, who had been cursed long before in their father? Thus, indeed, it is. The human mind, stuffed as it is with presumptuous rashness, dares to imagine a god suited to its own capacity; as it labours under dullness, nay, is sunk in the grossest ignorance, it substitutes vanity and an empty phantom in the place of God. To these evils another is added. The god whom man has thus conceived inwardly he attempts to embody outwardly. The mind, in this way, conceives the idol, and the hand gives it birth. That idolatry has its origin in the idea which men have, that God is not present with them unless his presence is carnally exhibited, appears from the example of the Israelites: "Up," said they, "make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wet not what is become of him," ([Exod. 22:1](#)). They knew, indeed, that there was a God whose mighty power they had experienced in so many miracles, but they had no confidence of his being near to them, if they did not with their eyes behold a corporeal symbol of his presence, as an attestation to his actual government. They desired, therefore, to be assured by the image which went before them, that they were journeying under Divine guidance. And daily experience shows, that the flesh is always restless until it has obtained some figment like itself, with which it may vainly solace itself as a representation of God. In

consequence of this blind passion men have, almost in all ages since the world began, set up signs on which they imagined that God was visibly depicted to their eyes.

Sermon:

Consider the Apostle John, he was:

- once simple a fisherman from Galilee, became a disciple of Jesus, was commissioned by Christ as an Apostle and empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry the Good News to “*the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8) and to make disciples of the nations (Matt 28:20);
- also strengthened to endure Roman tortures and exile, eventually becoming the last surviving Apostle; and,
- given wisdom and understanding of the Scriptures, was inspired to write this Gospel and several letters {and the Revelation} to strengthen and encourage Christ's church and every Christian believer.

We cannot help but be impressed and amazed at the power of God when reading this Gospel, for the LORD took such a simple and ordinary man and gave him the eloquence and gravitas to write the greatest story ever told:

- The story of the God Who took on flesh;
- Who added humanity to Himself and redeemed His chosen people in love;
- Who forgives our sin through faith in Him; and,
- Who will raise us up on the last day, bring us to Himself to dwell with Him, love Him, worship and enjoy Him forever.

Meditating upon the human source of these words reminds us that the LORD can and will also use us all in extraordinary and amazing ways, even though we are of no account and have no value in ourselves, apart from the great value that God alone ascribes to us.

However, John's words alone do not persuade us of their truth; it is God's Holy Spirit Who persuades us when He regenerates our heart. But that does not mean his words or his arguments have no merit; because they do. They are a means by which the truth and revelation of Jesus Christ is communicated to us. His words are reasoned and based in fact, conveying the wisdom and Word of God, thus John's words are a means to persuade.

John, in the first chapter of this Gospel, alleges that Jesus is the eternal God-man: the *Logos* who is *Theos* and is *Andros*; alleging through the mouth of John the Baptist that Jesus is “...*the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*” (Jn. 1:29 ESV) an atoning sacrifice of propitiation, and he alleges that Jesus' disciples believed Him to be the One of “...*whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote...*” (Jn. 1:45 ESV): the Messiah and the true “King of Israel” (John 1:41, 49).

Across the second chapter of this Gospel, John presents a case to prove these allegations. He offers the evidence of three “Signs” demonstrating that Jesus is the LORD, God Almighty. At the end of this second chapter, John concludes his case and then begins to transition us into the teaching ministry of Jesus.

Among the four Gospels, John's is unique in many ways, but the greatest difference is the fact that he wrote it for believers; to encourage and strengthen us with the Holy Spirit's comfort and giving us a deeper understanding of Jesus's teaching beyond the revelation of plain facts and stories about Christ.

The three Synoptic Gospels were written for people who did not believe yet, or for those who were recently converted to faith in Jesus' Name. They assume their reader or hearer knows little to nothing about Jesus: His Person and work; and assumes that they know little concerning the Hebrew Scriptures {or their Greek translation, the Septuagint} and the Jewish religion. But John's Gospel is different because, as is evident through his writing, he assumes that his audience already knows many facts about Jesus, that they have been catechized in the basics of the Christian faith, but that they may not yet know why. He assumes that while they already believe in Jesus, they may not yet understand why they believe or how they should be believing Him. This is not to say that John is initiating us into secret mysteries, as the Gnostics whom he opposed claimed to do themselves, but that he is expositing, explaining, elucidating, and illuminating the Scriptures, Jewish religion, through Jesus' life and teachings so that we may have strong *pisteuo* faith: knowing what we believe, why we believe it, and how it applies to life and our future hopes.

Being the last Gospel written, written later in the 1st Century, John does not need to establish the fact that Jesus lived, taught, died, and rose again because those are generally accepted facts. Instead, he teaches us concerning what the whole of Jesus' life means **for us**. John does not need to convince us that Jesus performed these many miracles, signs, and wonders. Instead, he teaches us what they symbolize, represent, and mean **for us** and more about why Jesus did the things He did.

Looking back into our text, John concludes his case of signs by writing, “*Now when he [Jesus] was in Jerusalem at the Passover Feast, many believed in his name when they saw the signs that he was doing.*”. People saw the many signs that Jesus did, therefore they believed in Him; they had faith in Him, *pisteuo* and trust in His divine and holy Name. But John is not arguing causality on account of the signs. He does not say that they believed **because of** the signs, merely saying that they believed after they saw the evidence which proves Who Jesus is: the God- man. Witnessing the signs was a stimulus which led them to faith, but the signs were not the operative means causing them to believe. Soon John will explain what that means is: regeneration; being “born again” by the Holy Spirit (3:3).

But first, John tells us something that is strange, surprising, and ironic, “*But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them...*”. That sounds like wisdom to us and seems pretty straightforward and obvious considering the fact the we know what people will eventually do to Jesus. So why am I saying that this is strange and ironic? It is ironic because while writing that “... *many believed in his name...*” and that Jesus “...*did not entrust himself to them...*”, John used the same term: *pisteuo*; the Greek term we most often translate and think about as “faith”.

- The irony is that while the people believed in Jesus, Jesus did not believe in the people.
- The irony is that while people willingly entrusted themselves to Jesus, Jesus was unwilling to entrust Himself to the people.

“To entrust oneself” is the element of faith that we most easily and most often forget or ignore. Faith, “saving faith” is a combination of belief and trust. Faith is a head and heart activity. Faith is an activity of trust born out of confident knowledge; as James writes, “*For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.*” (Jas. 2:26 ESV).

Consider the classic illustration of a chair. I believe that the chair is; that it exists. I believe that I can sit in it and I expect it to support my weight, but that is not faith. I may be totally confident about both aspects. I may believe this to be true because I have friends or family who have sat in the chair themselves but that is not faith, that is belief. My belief does not become faith until I sit down in the chair; until I **entrust** myself to the chair's strong support.

So, while we could read this to suggest that Jesus had “No faith in humanity”: that Jesus did not trust “people”; I think John means the exact opposite. Jesus trusted us. Jesus trusted us greatly, but He did not trust us to do the right, good, and Godly thing. Instead, He trusted us to act according to our sinful, fallen nature, “...because he knew all people and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”.

Jesus Christ. God the Son. The Word. The *Logos* who is *Theos* and is *Andros*. Who was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. The Light of life and the LORD God, our Sovereign Creator. It is certain and easy to believe that Jesus knew and Jesus knows people:

- not only because He made us;
- not only because He walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden;
- not only because He is the One who clothed Adam and Eve after their Fall into sinful rebellion;
- not only because He knows the entirety of past and future history, since He decreed all that was, is, and is to come;
- but because He is the LORD, the “*Judge of all the earth*” (Gen. 18:25 ESV) judging “...*the living and the dead.*” (1 Pet. 4:5 ESV) which, if He is to judge justly: with all fairness and in righteousness; then He must therefore, be privy to the inner and secret workings of every person's heart as through the prophet Jeremiah, God explains this to us.
 - “*I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.*”
- and because Jesus has a human heart, except one that is uncorrupted by original sin. He is God and He is man, but a man without sin due to His divine conception.

That is why Jesus “...needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.”, because He is eternally God. He knew because He knows our hearts and they testify against us constantly.

Ultimately, what does the LORD conclude from our hearts after He searches them and tests us? He concludes that “...*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick...*” and that is not very good for us. It is an indictment of our whole character, but it is actually far worse than the English translation of the Hebrew suggests.

- The Hebrew word translated as “heart” {*levv*} gives a sense ranging from our primary circulatory organ to encompass our human will, mind, and “inner man” {the Greek translates this as *kardia* #2588, which also term describes the seat and center of our human will, volition, emotion, and human “self” identity¹}.
- The Hebrew word that “deceitful” {*akov*} translates interprets a simple term which may be used to mean “hilly”, “uneven”, or “crafty” (Holladay; Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the OT, #6511). It is inconstant, unreliable, undependable and in clear opposition to the straightforward, easy, and narrow way of God. Although it may “look fine” from a distance, upon closer examination its' ruggedness becomes tragically evident. {and}
- The Hebrew word translated as “desperately sick” {*anosh*} does not convey its full direness. It is calamitous. It is beyond mere sickness. It is “incurable” sickness. It is a “terminal” illness. It is

¹ <https://www.blueletterbible.org/lexicon/g2588/kjv/tr/0-1/>

something that no thing, no practice, and no wisdom available to human ingenuity is able to heal, repair, or prevent.

This is perhaps the simplest and clearest expression within Scripture demonstrating the Reformed doctrine of “Total Depravity”: a term which itself now even seems to be lacking; the doctrine that no part of our humanity is untouched, uncorrupted by sin.

So, when John tells us that Jesus “...*did not entrust himself to...*” humanity, he is explaining that Jesus knew that there is no hope to be found within mankind; that there is no help to be found within mankind; that we all suffer and are trapped within our sinful condition; a condition the Westminster Shorter Catechism describes as “...the guilt of Adam’s first sin, **the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole nature**, which is commonly called original sin; together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.” (WSC #18).

The world, through folks like Disney, has been teaching the greatest lie of our age; telling us all to “Follow Your Heart”. This is advice which, if followed by everyone to its furthest and logical end point, must end in absolute, total, and utter anarchy.

Imagine, if you will (as Rod Serling used to say), a world where Jesus had a sinful nature, where Jesus was corrupted by original sin; a world where Jesus gave into the temptation of sin and followed His heart. He might have achieved every human desire and goal, but He would have also become a tyrant and despot utterly enslaved to sin in the process. Consider what might have happened, if Jesus **had** entrusted Himself to humanity, knowing what we know about Jesus and His capabilities from the Gospels. The Jews wanted a Messiah-King: a revolutionary war hero, like king David or one of the Judges; Jesus certainly could have been that and even more, He could have been the greatest of all.

- Jesus was popular and inspirational. People loved Him and He attracted a large following.
- Jesus fed 5,000 men with just a few loaves and fishes and He transformed water into wine. So, He could have easily provided for any sized army.
 - Who could stand against an army that had no reason to be concerned about their supply train?
- Jesus healed the sick, injured, and deformed. He also raised the dead. So, He could have just healed His troops of every injury and resurrected His lost fighting men after every battle.
 - Who could stand against an army that cannot run out of soldiers?
- Jesus walked on water and He also called Peter out of the boat, commanding him to walk out to Him while He was standing upon the waves.
 - How do you defend against an army that natural barriers and boundaries cannot stop or slow?
- Jesus calmed the storm by commanding it to “Be still”. So, He likely could have summoned storms against His enemies.
 - Who can stand against an army whose general also commands the elements?

So, of course the people would want to crown Jesus as king, because through Him Israel would rule the world, even as they would lose their soul. You see, if Jesus had entrusted Himself to humanity and surrendered Himself to a sinful nature, then we would not have had a deliverer but a wicked tyrant instead. If Jesus had followed a

sinful heart like ours, then He would not have willingly hung upon the cross, dying to give us eternal life; instead He would have lived and we would be dying eternally.

The world likes to teach that our “heart” is the best arbiter in life and while the Law of God is written upon our hearts universally (Romans 2), our sin prevents us from loving it and wanting to obey it. The world teaches that our heart determines what is right and what is wrong. Remember, even Elvis told us that if something “feels” so right, then it cannot be wrong ².

This is the one accepted absolute in relativism, the foundation of all post-modern thought, “What is right for you, is what is right, and your heart is the only way to know what is right for you.” Yet our heart is subjective and inconstant. The only thing constant and consistent concerning the human heart is that it only cares about #1: itself and its own self-gratification; which is the practical definition of sinfulness, idolatrous worship of ourselves instead of the LORD.

This is the primary consequence of the Fall. Our heart becomes our idol, our God, our preferred lord of life, because it is most concerned with our feelings of happiness, our enjoyment, our pleasure, and all of the uncountable immediate felt “goods”. Honestly, our natural human heart does not care about God or His glory; it only cares for our own honor, glory, and privilege. This, our idolatry of self, is why John Calvin concluded that our heart and our mind is “a perpetual forge of idols” (Institutes III.xii.8). While our culture and modern society removes all sense of the supernatural, miraculous, and divine from the public sphere, our heart continues to create and craft new idols for us to worship.

Although the modern “gods of this world”, our new idols, are not named Ba'al, Zeus, Athena, Horus, Thor, Artemis, or Odin they are no different and no less ineffectual for our personal satisfaction and salvation. Our new idols are called: sports, cell phones, Internet, philanthropy, protest, social justice, equity, work, school, and even “Love”; things which are themselves good creations but become sinful idols when our concern for them is disproportionate and inappropriate. Sadly, the social ideal of “Love” may be the worst idol of all because it is really *philautia* (self love) that they worship instead of *agape* (selfless love); which is the love of Christ for us and the “Love” that God **is** (1 John 4:16).

The world teaches that we must always trust our feelings regarding love. Yet we do not really love others, not by natural inclination. However, we do love the way we feel when people are indebted to us. We love the gratitude they show towards us when we “love” them. Loving others is what we do when our sinful heart likes “What's in it for me?”. That is *philautia*.

Whereas Jesus' love, Jesus *agape*, is radical, counter-intuitive, and contrary to the world because, only from Him may we experience true, self-sacrificing love. “*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.*” (Jn. 15:13 ESV). There was no worldly gain or benefit for Jesus in dying upon the cross. That is why honest and earnest Christian love is obeying Jesus' “*...commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*” (Jn. 15:12 ESV). But unless His Holy Spirit has changed you, unless He dwells within you, all you will ever do is “Follow your heart”. The slogan sounds great. It sounds loving and free, but it is the anti-Christian slogan from which every trouble flows.

If you are following your heart, then you are not following Jesus Christ. Following our heart will always lead us into disobedience:

- disobeying the authority of our parents;

2 https://www.lyrics.com/lyric/944772/Elvis+Presley/It+Feels+So+Right#google_vignette

- disobeying the authority of duly appointed government;
- disobeying social norms and common conventions; or
- disobeying the natural order and the propriety of relationships.

Following our heart will always lead us away from God, into sin. Following their heart:

- led Eve to eat the forbidden fruit.
- led Cain to murder his brother.
- led Joseph's brothers to sell him into slavery.
- led Pharaoh to murder newborn Hebrew boys.
- led Samson to Delilah.
- led David to Bathsheba.
- led the kingdom of Judah into Babylonian exile.
- led Herod to murder the boys in Bethlehem in hope of preserving his kingdom.
- led the tax collector Zacchaeus to exploit his people.
- led Judas to betray Jesus and Peter to deny knowing Jesus three times.

Trusting ourselves, leaning upon our own understanding or wisdom, is certain to lead us into ruin and disaster. We cannot help it. We cannot help ourselves, but the good news is: Jesus can help us and He does. Jesus is our only help and hope. That is why He did not “entrust” Himself to us and that is why we must entrust ourselves to Him. We are all sinners: each and every one of us; and the only judgment and reward we each deserve when the LORD searches our heart and tests our mind is death: “*the wages of sin*” (Rom 6:23).

Whenever we follow our heart we earn those “*wages of sin*”, by rejecting the “*free gift of righteousness*” and “*abundance of grace*” found in Christ Jesus (Rom 5:17). But when we follow Christ instead of our heart, we:

- Confess our sin before the LORD, as Adam and Eve confessed eating (Gen 3:12-13).
- Obey the difficult commands of the LORD, even against popular reason, as Noah built the Ark (Gen 6:22).
- Leave our country, people, and family of origin trusting the LORD's promises, as Abraham left Ur and Haran (Gen 12:4).
- Trust the LORD's good provision, as Moses and the Israelites trusted it in the wilderness for forty years (Deut 8:4).
- Repent of our sin and seek the LORD's heart, as David did (1 Sam 13:14); as Zacchaeus and Peter did.
- Stand against the world and against ungodly authorities commanding us against the LORD, as Elijah stood against Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 17-21).

- Meekly yet confidently suffer persecution, unjust punishment, and slander while also praying for the deliverance of our enemies, as Jeremiah did (Jeremiah).

So, if we entrust ourselves to Jesus, then we will take up our own cross and follow Him. We will follow Him and carry His Gospel of reconciliation, love, and peace to the ends of the earth **and** also to the end of our street.

If we entrust ourselves to Jesus, then we will live as disciples of Christ and we will make disciples of Christ (Matt 28:18-20). We will raise up our children: biologic, adoptive, and spiritual; teaching them the way in which they should go, so that they never depart it (Prov 22:6). We will teach them to “Not follow [their] heart”.

If we entrust ourselves to Jesus, then we are confident that the LORD will ultimately give to us according to Jesus' ways, according to the fruit of His deeds, because He alone is the perfect, righteous, and sinless man; our covenant representative before the LORD. It is by His wounds that we are healed (Is 53:5). It is by His shed blood that our sins are forgiven (Luke 22:20; Rom 3:25; Heb 2:17; 1 John 2:2, 4:10). It is by His death and resurrection that shall have eternal life.

Therefore, believe and trust in His Name: have *pisteuo* in Christ Jesus.

You can see the signs All the necessary evidence is here within Scripture. Jesus is God, the only God and the only Lord of life. He is the eternal Sovereign over creation. So live in faith and by faith. Ask Christ to transform you: to give you His heart and His mind; so that you may live in and with Him forever. Entrust yourself to Him because He knows your heart and He alone can change it.

AMEN