

**You Can't Win -- If Your  
Heart's Not in It!**

**By Keith Greer**

Since I was a little boy, listening to my dad sing, I've been a big fan of Country and Western music. Sadly, many of the songs are about things -- cheating, drinking, and carousing -- of which God does not approve, but sometimes, a song leaves a powerful message. As I drove along the road one day, listening to a country radio station, I heard Jane Fricke sing the song -- "You Can't Win If Your Heart's Not in It." While there is absolutely nothing spiritual about this song, a spiritual application of the words in the title provides an appropriate lesson for us to consider.

The word "heart" is a word often misunderstood and misapplied by many in the religious world. Biblically speaking, the heart is best described as man's entire mental and moral activity, both the rational and the emotional elements. "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." {Proverbs 4:23} "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he. Eat and drink! He says to you, but his heart is not with you." {Proverbs 23:7} Man's heart is the thing that motivates and directs his thinking and actions.

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me." {John 14:1} If we believe in God and His promises, our minds do not have to be troubled by worry. "That I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart." {Romans 9:2} This has reference to the anguish Paul felt because of the refusal of his kinsmen to accept Jesus Christ.

Many times, in His teaching while He was on earth, our Lord made reference to a problem his hearers had. "For the hearts of this people have grown dull, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I could heal them." {Matthew 13:15} These people would not receive with obedient attitudes the words they heard. They rejected Jesus because they chose to, not because they did not understand His teaching.

In other words, in the Bible, the heart is used figuratively for the "HIDDEN SPRINGS" of the personal life. By examining the scriptures, we are better able to understand and make proper application so that our own hearts will be right before God.

"But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the HEART that form of doctrine which was delivered you-" (Romans 6:17) Not only must man leave sin, he must submit his own will to God's will and determine to obey only God's will. Man can never truly leave sin until he is totally ready to submit himself to God (2 Corinthians 8:5). God does not want partial, limited obedience.

"Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy HEART, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind." (Matthew 22:37) Quite often, Christians quote this passage, but many never come to obey it. Yes, we love God, but how much. To love Him with all my HEART is to give myself wholly to living according to His commandments (John 14:15). My will is not my will, but His. My life is now completely subjected to His divine law. He is first in my time, money, thoughts, and love. As Samuel stated in 1 Samuel 3:10, "SPEAK LORD, FOR THY SERVANT HEARETH." Do you have that much love for God?

"And whatsoever ye do, do it HEARTILY, as unto the Lord, as not unto men; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ." (Colossians 3:23,24) Do you enjoy being a Christian? Do you willingly do all of the things God asks of you? Can it be said that you put "YOUR ALL" into serving Him?

The Christian's life should be a happy, fulfilling life, and as Christians, we should be anxious to offer any small sacrifices God asks of us. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." {1 Peter 4:12,13} Can we ever outgive the love of God?

We're all striving for, or should be striving for, salvation. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." {1 Peter 1:3-5}

Do you remember our Lord's words in the Sermon on the Mount? "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." {Matthew 7:13,14} Why just a few?

To put it simply -- their hearts are not in it. Doing just enough to "get by," or going through the motions of a faithful child of God is not enough. Unless our hearts are truly in it, we will fail. In order to overcome the trials, tribulations, obstacles, and persecutions about which God has warned us, our hearts must be involved. Read prayerfully the following words.

"Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." {2 Timothy 3:12}

"In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you." {1 Peter 4:4}

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me." {Matthew 10:34-38}

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind,

that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." {Romans 12:1,2}

"For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have." {2 Corinthians 8:12}

Dear readers, unless you are willing to do whatever task is before you, you cannot live the Christian life, endure the difficulties that come your way, and gain the eternal rest promised by Christ. The Christian life is not for those who are faint of heart or unwilling to make personal sacrifices. We can reap only if we do not faint (Galatians 6:9). There remains just one question to be answered. Is your HEART really into living for Christ? If it isn't, to inherit the crown for which we all strive, you must make a course correction.