

Is our redeemed heart really good?

| The redeemed heart is good | Maybe not |
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| I will give them a new heart to know me . . . Jer 24:7 | The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure . . . Jer 17:9 |
| I will make a new covenant . . . Write it (my law) on their hearts. Jer 31:31-33 | . . . who looks . . . lustfully has already committed adultery . . . in his heart Mt 5:28 |
| I will give you a new heart. Ez 36:26 | What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart . . . evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. Mt 15:18-19 |
| So this is not me, but sin within me . . . My inner being (heart) is good, but sin in my members (flesh) . . . Rm 7:17, 22, 23 | So . . . he may establish your hearts unblamed. I Thes 3:13 |
| A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, . . . and circumcision is circumcision of the heart. Rm 2:27-28 | Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart. Heb 3:12 |
| Strengthen . . . your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your heart . . . Eph 3:16-17 | . . . let us draw near . . . with our hearts sprinkled clean . . . Heb 10:22 |
| You are not a God who takes pleasure in evil; with you the wicked cannot dwell. Ps 5:4 | . . . if you have bitter jealousy . . . in your hearts . . . Js 3:14 |
| The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart . . . Lk 6:45 | . . . purify your hearts, you men of double mind Js 4:8 |
| Those who hearing the Word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart . . . Lk 8:15 | |

It is obvious that something good has happened to us in the new covenant. The deceitful heart of Jeremiah 17 has been replaced by a different heart in Jeremiah 24 and Ezekiel 36. But our own experience, as believers, and the scriptures in the right hand column make us doubt that our new covenant heart is actually good. Haven't we at least committed adultery in our hearts at one time or another after we were Christians? And doesn't that make our hearts bad, even evil (as Jesus said in Matthew 5:28)? And what about the rest of scriptures in the right column of the table above? Don't they show

that our hearts need purifying, cleaning, establishing?

To reconcile these scriptures, we need to understand what the Bible means by the term *heart*. This is a little confusing, so listen carefully. In some places, the Bible term *heart* means the essential you. In other instances the term *heart* means the whole you, including your flesh. When Paul uses the term heart or inner being, he means the *essential you*. When Jesus is speaking evil things coming out of the heart, he was probably either speaking of the whole you, including the flesh, or the unredeemed heart.

Paul spends a lot of time in Romans 6-8 explaining this essential doctrine of the difference between the flesh and the heart.

Bottom line is that we know God has done something to our hearts* that is good. And it is from this good place in us that we can stand and fight our fleshly desires, worldly temptations and the attacks of the enemy. Without knowing there is a place in us that is good, we would often give up, thinking we were all bad and hopeless. As it is, we do have good hearts (the essential, redeemed, us) and from that place of strength and goodness, we can fight our battles.

* Semantics plays a large role here is confusing the issue. It doesn't matter whether we call our redeemed heart good, part of our heart is good, our spirits good or our inner man good. We just know that as redeemed ones, we have been changed inside. And from that good place, whatever you want to call it, we can commune with God, know his love and related to one another.

The following is excerpted from the booklet, *Resolving Misunderstanding of the Exchanged Life* by John E. Best, Th D. Exchanged Life Ministries Texas
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Much misunderstanding has occurred because of the improper translation of the Greek word *sarx* as “sinful nature” in such modern versions as the New International Version (NIV). *Sarx* is properly translated “flesh,” as in most translations (KJV, NKJV, NASB, RSV, etc.). By mistranslating (actually misinterpreting) this word as “sinful nature,” the NIV implies that the believer’s true identity (his nature) is both part sinful and part new creation in Christ. Thus in trying to live the Christian life, the believer is destined to fight against the sinful part of his true

identity. To say that the believer has both an old nature and a new nature is to make the same mistake, setting up a hopeless, continual struggle of the believer against himself.

The Scriptures, however, are clear on this issue. Our old man, our old, sinful nature inherited from Adam, was crucified on the cross with Christ (Romans 6:6). Our new man, created in the likeness of Christ, righteous and holy, was raised up with him (Ephesians 4:24). We no longer have a “sinful nature.” God put it to death. What we do have is an entirely new identity as a new creation in Christ. In our spirit, our deepest being, we are righteous, just like Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Why, then, do we still sin? Because as long as we remain in our unredeemed earthly bodies we still have “flesh,” which is a

propensity to seek life through our own resources, apart from God. Flesh is not who we truly are (Romans 7:13-23), but it remains temporarily with us, and is something we must deal with. And, as the Scriptures make clear, we are accountable to God for the choices we make: whether to walk in dependence upon God (“by the Spirit”) or dependence upon ourselves (“by the flesh”). When a Christian sins (living according to the flesh), he is going against his true nature, which is created in the likeness of God (Ephesians 4:24). It is precisely because of this fact that sin is opposed to the true nature of a believer, that Paul reacts so vehemently against the notion that a Christian would continue in sin (Romans 6:1-2).