

Hearts Opened to God

*“The word of God
is quick, and
powerful, and
sharper than any
twoedged sword, . . .
and is a discerner
of the thoughts and
intents of the
heart. Neither is
there any creature
that is not
manifest in his
sight: but all
things are naked
and opened unto
the eyes of him
with whom we
have to do.”
—Hebrews 4:12,13*

IT IS NOT SURPRISING TO

be reminded by the Scriptures that the great Creator of the universe is able to read our thoughts and to discern even the intents of our hearts. It would be unreasonable to suppose that he who created man would not be able to read the thoughts which are recorded on the brain. We are reminded of this in connection with the anointing of David to be the successor of Saul in the rulership of Israel. David was the youngest of several sons of Jesse. When

the Prophet Samuel came to anoint one of these to be king of Israel, David was not even considered. He was left in the field to care for the sheep.

The rejection by God of the other sons of Jesse was indicated, and when Samuel asked if there

were still others, David was brought in. He proved to be the Lord's choice. God's explanation to Samuel was that while man looks on the outward appearance as his way of judging character, "the LORD looketh on the heart."—I Sam. 16:7

The fact that the intents of our hearts are "naked and opened" before God should make us exceedingly careful of our words, thoughts, and doings. What a control this should produce upon our actions and motives! According to the foregoing, even if the words remain behind our lips, the Lord would know they were there.

On the other hand, the knowledge that God knows our weaknesses should not be a great discouragement, for it reminds us that because we have a sympathetic High Priest, we can seek mercy when we have failed and find grace to help in time of need. We are encouraged through our knowledge of the atoning blood of Christ to go "boldly unto the throne of grace" if we are sincere in our hearts. (Heb. 4:16) Sincerity and a conscience in harmony with the Lord's will are two of the vital needs of a follower of Jesus.

JESUS OUR EXAMPLE

In Psalm 40, verse 9, we find Jesus prophetically speaking of himself, and saying, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest." Knowing that God can read our hearts, can we say to him as Jesus did, "O Lord, thou knowest"? Can we declare, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts"?—Ps. 139:23

The Apostle Peter seemed sure of the determination of his heart to serve the Lord. We have an

example of this in his conversation with Jesus on the shore of Galilee after the Master had been raised from the dead. "Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15) On the night before the crucifixion, when Jesus said that all his disciples would forsake him, Peter affirmed that even if all the others did he would not. Thus he claimed a greater love for Jesus than did the others. It turned out that he was the only one who openly denied Christ. So now Jesus was asking, "Lovest thou me more than these?"

Peter did not then claim to love Jesus more than the others did, but he did affirm his love. He said, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee." Then Jesus asked Peter again the second time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter answered, "Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep." Then Jesus said to Peter the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because Jesus had asked him the same question the third time, and he replied to the Master, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep."—vss. 16,17

Peter's experience in denying the Lord had taught him that his Master, like the Heavenly Father, could read the thoughts and intents of the heart, for Jesus had told Peter of his forthcoming denial, even though Peter asserted that he would never do anything like this. He did, however, so now he knew that Jesus could read his thoughts and the intents of his heart. God knew Peter's heart, and he knows ours. This would be terrifying but for

the knowledge that we have an Advocate with the Father, who is Jesus, and who in his love made provision through his blood for our unwilling imperfections.—I John 2:1,2

I KNOW THY WORKS

As evidenced in the foregoing example, the ability of our Heavenly Father to read the thoughts and intents of our hearts was also possessed by Jesus. In the risen Lord's messages to the seven churches, as recorded in the second and third chapters of Revelation, this is brought very vividly to our attention. To the church at Ephesus, Jesus said, "I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted."—Rev. 2:2,3

Is this true of us, or would the Lord also say to us as he did to the church at Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love"? (vs. 4) Perhaps we can recall our "first love"—our enthusiasm over the vision of truth. At that time nothing could stand in our way. There was no task in connection with the service of God that was too difficult, and no sacrifice too great. The mundane cares of life took on a brightness we never knew before. We loved the Lord's people continually, and were willing to lay down our life for them at any time. We sought out every possible opportunity for service to the brethren, and for bearing witness to the glorious Gospel of the kingdom.

This was our first love. We trust that we can say to the Lord, as Peter did, "Thou knowest that I love thee." Yea, I love thee and love thy people and love the Truth today more than I ever did before. Thou knowest that I have lost none of my enthusiasm, none of my first love and zeal. Thou knowest that today, even as when you revealed yourself to me through the Truth, I have the same consuming zeal to serve thee as I had at the beginning. Surely, we would not want to confess to the Lord that this was not true.

TO THYATIRA

To the church at Thyatira, the resurrected Jesus said, "I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first." (Rev. 2:19) This was a wonderful commendation, and it should be also true of us. Instead of losing any of our first love and zeal, it should increase. Our works, as we progress in the school of Christ, should be more than at the beginning. The Lord is the same, and the Truth is the same. We should not allow ourselves to change and become indifferent to the privileges the Lord has opened up to us through the Truth. We should have more charity, or love—a love that manifests itself toward the Lord, the brethren, and the Truth. This love should continue to urge us on to sacrifice time, strength, and means in the promotion of the Truth, and to bear witness to it.

We should also have more faith. Indeed, since we first knew the Lord, the outworking of his plan in fulfillment of prophecy should have enlarged our

faith. The overruling of his providential care in our lives should also have increased our faith. The joys of sacrificial service for the Lord, the Truth, and the brethren should likewise add to our faith.

In our earnest desire to please the Lord and to be worthy of his love, we should go to him in prayer and give assurance that we are aware that he knows all things, even the thoughts and intents of our hearts. We should ask him to help us overcome any selfish spirit we may have. We should solicit his help to detect any sin in our hearts and to cleanse us from secret faults. Since he knows all things, he knows that the greatest desire of our hearts is to hear him say, “Well done,” and to know when we hear this that he is speaking to us.

PROMISES TO THE CHURCHES

In addition to Jesus’ appraisal of the heart condition of his people in the seven churches, he also makes promises to the truly faithful among them. Surely we want to be worthy of the Master’s love, that these promises may in due time be fulfilled in us. We want to be worthy in order that we may “eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God,” and to be faithful unto death, that we may receive the promised crown of life. We desire to be worthy of eating of the “hidden manna”—the antitype of the golden bowl of manna which was placed in the ark of the covenant in the Most Holy of the Tabernacle. We long to be found worthy to receive a “white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it.”—Rev. 2:7,10,17

We want also to be worthy of receiving “power over the nations,” even as Jesus promised, so that in the outworking of God’s great plan we may ultimately have the opportunity of blessing all those who come into harmony with the righteous rulership of the glorious kingdom of righteousness and life. We aspire to be worthy of having our names written in the “book of life,” as well as experiencing the unspeakable joy of having our names confessed before the Father and before the angels. What a joy it will be also to have written upon us the name of our God and the name of the city of our God—the new Jerusalem. We know that all these wonderful promises will be fulfilled in the bride of Christ, who throughout the age has been making “herself ready.”—Rev. 2:26; 3:5,12; 19:7

Here, at the end of the age, and in the time of the Master’s Second Presence, we have heard his knock, and have invited him to come into our hearts and “sup” with us. May we each hear and obey what “the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (chap. 3:20-22) Let us ever remember that we are “naked and opened” before him, and that he can read our thoughts and the intents of our hearts. May we earnestly say to him, “Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.” ■