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Protect Your Heart Allen Dvorak

Heart problems. Those two words can send chills down our spine. We know that the condition of our heart can impact both the quality and length of our lives. A weak heart can severely restrict our activities and perhaps can even indicate a shortened lifespan. Fortunately, medical science has made tremendous advances in the care and prevention of cardiovascular problems. Conditions which a couple of generations ago would have been certain death sentences are now treatable, allowing people to resume most or all of their normal activities.

Nevertheless, a person can be in wonderful physical condition with a strong cardiovascular system and yet be in danger. His physical heart may be in great shape, but he may have a serious problem with his spiritual heart. What is the spiritual heart? Often the Bible refers to the mind of man as his “heart” rather than the muscle which pumps blood through his body. A man thinks or reasons in his heart (Mark 2:6-8). He believes with his heart (Romans 10:10) and he speaks from the “treasury” of his heart (Matthew 12:34,35). The Biblical heart is not just the seat of emotions; it is where man wills, where his conscience is found. Sin finds its origin in the heart of man (Mark 7:21).

One of the most serious spiritual heart problems which man can suffer is “hardening of the heart.” Hardening of the heart is actually a process in which the heart becomes progressively less receptive to certain stimuli. The person afflicted often does not want to listen to divine truth. Sometimes the ability to understand or perceive spiritual things is diminished (Mark 6:52; Matthew 13:15). Do we still have hearts to hear...or have our hearts slowly become calloused to the story of the sacrificial love of the Son of God? “Keep your heart with all diligence...” (Proverbs 4:23).

In the parable of the soils, the wayside ground was hardened by the feet of the people who walked on it (Matthew 13:3-9). When the seed, the Word of God, falls on this soil, it lies on the hardened surface and cannot penetrate. This soil represents the person whose heart has been hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:13), ritualistic religion or even

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the humanist philosophies of men (e.g. evolution). This person hears the gospel, but is not receptive to the message. Jesus said that Satan comes and snatches the seed away.

With our physical hearts, often the first warning sign that we recognize is a minor heart attack. Unfortunately, many people with spiritual heart problems never do recognize their condition! Just as with the physical heart, it is prudent to have a “periodic check-up” on the condition of the spiritual heart. How receptive are we to the teaching of the Bible? Do we turn away from truth because it does not match what we want to do with our lives? The person with a spiritual heart problem needs to visit the Great Physician.