

“Yet Not With a Whole Heart”

The biblical “heart” occasionally, but rarely, refers to the physical blood-pumping organ. More usually, the center and seat of man’s *thoughts* and *emotions* is intended. As physical life is dependent upon the blood-pumping organ, so is the spiritual life of man determined upon its biblical counterpart. Thus, the proverbial writer penned, “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life,*” Proverbs 4:23. Not only is our spiritual life itself reliant upon this organ, it determines our course and direction. It dictates, by our diligent spiritual watch-care of and over it, our spiritual well-being or, conversely, our spiritual disease and death. Like its physical counterpart, if some part or section of it is not working properly, certain disaster awaits.

With these things in mind, consider Amaziah, an ancient king of Judah. Initially, the record of his reign over God’s people in 2Chronicles 24 seems favorable, stating that he “*did right in the sight of the Lord,*” v.2. But the latter half of the verse also contains this foreboding epitaph, “*yet not with a whole heart.*” Let’s look a little closer at exactly what these things mean...

- In vv.3-4, Amaziah enacted the prescribed punishment under the Law regarding those who had murdered his father, but was also careful not to allow his heart to carry out additional vengeance upon their children. This was according to God’s law as contained in Deuteronomy 24:16, “*Fathers shall not be put to death for sons, nor sons be put to death for fathers, but each shall be put to death for his own sin.*”
- In vv.5-10, we see that Amaziah hired and organized an army in preparation for battle. But when “*a man of God,*” a prophet, warned against such action, though his heart may have desired otherwise, he obeyed and dismissed them.
- In vv.11-13, Amaziah “*strengthened himself*” (his army) and went out in battle against “*the sons of Seir*” (Edomites, descendants of Esau). He and his army killed 20,000, but some of his troops also raided captured 3,000 from among cities in Judah (thus, countrymen).
- But in vv.14-16, apparently that part of Amaziah’s heart that was *not wholly committed* to God shows itself. After he returned from victory over the Edomites, “*he brought the gods of the sons of Seir, set them up as his gods, and bowed down before them, and burned incense to them,*” v.14. God’s prophet confronted him regarding his sin, and asked an entirely logical and pertinent question in v.15, “*Why have you sought the gods of the people who have not delivered their own people from your hand?*” Great question! The answer is actually found back in v.2. Amaziah wasn’t serving the Lord *with his whole heart*.

All of this brings us to a vital point of consideration: Are we/you doing right in the sight of the Lord, but perhaps not *with our/your whole heart*?

Though we might be doing some, or even many, things *right according to the Law*, is a lack of *whole-hearted* dedication to the Lord and His commandments setting us up for an inevitable fall into sin and destruction? Are we reserving a part of our hearts for the fulfillment of our own desires instead giving them wholly to the Lord for His purposes?

The rest of the story of Amaziah is not pretty, nor does it end happily ever after for him. He ultimately rejected both the prophet of God and his rebuke, v.16a; and his fate was sealed when God’s prophet said, “*I know that God has planned to destroy you, because you have done this, and have not listened to my voice,*” v.16b.

The rupture in Amaziah’s heart led him to be lifted up in pride. He tried to pick a fight with Joash, the king of Israel, v.17. Joash attempted to warn him in v.19, “*Behold, you have defeated Edom. And your heart has become proud in boasting. Now stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble that you, even you, should fall and Judah with you?*” But Amaziah would not listen (again)

to wise counsel. He and his army faced Joash and the army of Israel at Beth-shemesh, but were defeated, v.22. The sad, final inscription of Amaziah's life is contained in v.27, "*And from that time Amaziah turned away from following the Lord...*"

This is the fate of all of us who do "*right in the sight of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.*" You see, the diseased part always, if not repaired and rejoined to the good, eventually destroys the rest of hearts that are not *wholly dedicated to God*. Won't you please heed the warning of wise counsel from the pages of God's Word, and give your heart *wholly* to the Lord? Give your thoughts, your emotions, and the course and direction of your life *wholly* to Him! "*And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,*" Mark 12:30. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)