

Heart Studies #1 - Preparing the Heart

A recurring theme in 2 Chronicles is preparation of the heart: We will look at 6 references there, leaving several references in chapters 29-31 for a later time.

2 Chron. 11:16 – after the division of the kingdom (10 northern tribes to Jeroboam, called Israel, and 2 remaining tribes to Rehoboam, called Judah), Jeroboam led Israel to apostasy and idolatry, so some of the faithful in Israel "set their hearts to seek the Lord God of Israel" and came south to Jerusalem (Judah).

2 Chr. 12:14 – Rehoboam did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord.

2 Chr. 19:3 – A prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for being allied with wicked king Ahab, and warned that wrath would come upon him from the Lord. Nevertheless he was commended for taking away the groves out of the land, and because he had prepared his heart to seek God.

2 Chr. 20:31-33 – At the end of Jehoshaphat's life, it was said that he had walked in the way of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord. Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.

2 Chr. 25:2 – Amaziah did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, but not with a perfect heart.

2 Chr. 27:6 – So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.

Ezra 7:10 – "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."

To prepare is simply to make ready, as to prepare a meal, to make preparations for an event, to prepare a sacrifice, to prepare the way of the Lord (John Baptist), etc. So **to prepare the heart is to make your heart ready to be able to hear God, and respond to him.**

1. God rebukes those who don't prepare their hearts, and commends and blesses those who do.

- Rebukes - Rehoboam, the people in general, and Amaziah
- Commendations – the faithful who forsook Israel to go to Judah, Jehoshaphat, Jotham, Ezra

2. Failure to prepare the heart results in:

- Doing evil - 2 Chron. 12:14 (Rehoboam did evil, because he prepared not his heart)
- Inability to hear God
- Self-satisfaction, self-delusion, and false confidence
- Bondage to enemies (not just nations, but things like addictions, habitual sins, etc.)

3. God commands us to prepare our hearts to seek him -

- 1 Sam. 7:3 - And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the LORD with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the LORD, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines.
- Hos. 10:12 - Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.

4. God is more concerned with the heart's condition than with outward obedience

- 2 Chron. 25:2 – Amaziah did right, but with a bad heart
- 2 Chron. 30:18-20 – The people did wrong, but with a right heart

This is not surprising. Parents are not honored or happy with grudging, grumbling, complaining obedience from their children, yet overlook a lot if a child is trying to please them.

5. How can we prepare our hearts?

- **Be quiet** (wait on God; Ps. 46:10 - be still and know that I am God)
- **Get serious.** Stop concentrating on the silly and frilly, the purely temporal things, and start considering what is of eternal significance.
- Honestly **examine your heart.** Consider the state of your soul and where it stands before God.
- Put away idols, **determine to serve God only** - 1 Sam. 7:3, 2 Chron. 19:3
- **Repent** of any known sin, be willing to confess faults
- Be willing to **spend time with God** in prayer, Bible study, meditation, and fasting. This may involve simple determination and an act of the will (instead of waiting until the mood strikes you). Ezra 7:10

6. Know that really, it is God who is working in us to prepare the heart

- Ps. 10:17 – LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:
- Prov. 16:1 – The preparations of the heart in man, and the answer of the tongue, *is* from the LORD.
- Phl. 2:13 – For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

David's prayer for Israel and Solomon in 1 Chron. 29:18-20 can be modified for our use:

O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee: And give unto Solomon my son [us] a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things . . . And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the Lord your God. And all the congregation blessed the Lord God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the Lord, and the king.