

**A HEART
OF
FLESH**

Richard Alleine

Agape Chapel Ministries
P.O. Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90652
USA

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Web: www.sounddoctrine.net
e-mail: acm@sounddoctrine.net

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I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

1. Repentance is a grace, and must have its daily operation, as well as other graces. A true penitent must go on from faith to faith, from strength to strength; he must never stand still or turn back. True repentance is a continued spring, where the waters of godly sorrow are always flowing. 'My sin is ever before me'.

2. Those years, months, weeks, days, and hours, that are not filled up with God, with Christ, with grace, and with duty, will certainly be filled up with vanity and folly. The neglect of one day, of one duty, of one hour, would undo us, if we had not an Advocate with the Father.

3. A man's most glorious actions will at last be found to be but glorious sins, if he hath made himself, and not the glory of God, the end of those actions.

4. God sees us in secret, therefore, let, us seek his face in secret. Though heaven be God's palace, yet it is not his prison.

5. Christ choosing solitude for private prayer, doth not only hint to us the danger of distraction and deviation of thoughts in prayer, but how necessary it is for us to choose the most convenient places we can for private prayer. Our own fickleness and Satan's restlessness call upon us to get into such places where we may freely pour out our soul into the bosom of God [Mark 1.35].

6. Let those be thy choicest companions who have made Christ their chief companion.

The old heart is a stone, cold as a stone, as a stone, dead as a stone, hard as a stone; but I will take away the stone, and give a heart of flesh. A heart of flesh is a soft and tender heart; flesh can feel any thing that is contrary to it, puts it to pain. Sin makes it smart; it cannot kick, but it is against the pricks, by its rebellion and resistance against the Lord, it receives a wound; it cannot hit, but it hurts itself. A soft hand gets nothing by laying on, on a hedge of thorns. A soft heart, when it hath been meddling with sin, is sure to smart for it. It can neither escape the pain, nor yet endure it; and what it cannot bear, it will take warning to avoid. Flesh will bleed. A soft heart will mourn, and melt, and grieve, when hard hearts are moved at nothing. Flesh will yield.

It is apt to receive impressions. The power of God will awe it; his justice alarm it; his mercy melt it; his holiness humble it, and leave the stamp and image of it upon it. And as the attributes, so the word and works of God will make sign upon it. Who sets a seal upon a stone? or what print will it receive? Upon the wax, the print will abide. God speaks once and twice, but man, hardened man, will not regard it. Neither his word nor his rod, neither his speaking nor his smiting will make any sign on such hearts. It is the heart of flesh that hears and yields. And with such hearts the Lord delights to be dealing. "The heart of this people is waxed gross," Acts

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xxviii. 27. they will not hear, they will not understand; and the next word is, Away to the Gentiles, they will hear. He will no more write his law on tables of stone : he will write in flesh; there the impression will take, and go the deeper: and, therefore, wherever He intends to write, he prepares his table makes this stone flesh, and then engraves upon it

Particularly this tenderness admits of a double distinction. 1. Respecting the object of it; so there is a tenderness, 1. Of sin. 2. Of duty. 3. Of suffering.

of sin ; and that is twofold, such as discovers itself, before the commission, and after the commission of it.

(I.) Before the commission. Whilst it is under a temptation, or feels the first motion to sin. A tender heart startles, starts back at the sight of a sin, as at the sight of a devil; How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Gen.33 xxxix, 9. The manner of the speech presents Joseph as a man in a fright, startled at the ugliness of the motion. So David when he had an opportunity, and a temptation to slay Saul, rejects it with "God forbid." The Lord forbid that I should stretch forth my hand against the Lord's anointed," I Sam. xxvi. "

And that not only at the higher and greater, but it resists the little ones, the smallest of sins. Is it riot a little one ? is no plea with it. Little or great, it is a sin, and that is enough. (2.) After the commission; if it hath been brought on upon sin, yet it cannot go out with it. The skirt of Saul's garment was too heavy for David's heart to bear. His heart smote him presently, I Sam. xxiv. 5. Sin in the review, looks dreadful. Its pleasant

smitten, but it will smite again; that will give due warning and due correction : a flexible, tractable heart, that will not resist and rebel; that says unto the Lord, What wilt thou have me to do ? and will not say of anything he will have, Any thing but this: a willing, ductile heart, stiff against nothing but sin, that a word from Heaven will lead to anything: a heart of love, that bears goodwill to the Lord, and all that he does or requires; in which good will lies, radically, every good work ; that says not of any duties or sufferings, This is too great or of any sin, This is nothing; that would be anything or nothing, so God may be all; that would rather be displeased than displease; that is not displeased when God is pleased: a trembling heart, that fears more than it sees, and flies from what it fears, whom fear makes to beware: a melting heart, a mourning heart, that wounds itself in the wounds it hath given to the Lord, and his name; that can grieve in love, and can love and grieve, where it cannot weep. In sum, it is a heart that can feel, that can bleed, that can weep ; or at least that can yield and stoop, where it cannot weep, nor feel but little, that will easily be commanded, where it is not sensibly melted; this is a soft heart, this is the heart of flesh.

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P.O.Box 59084
Norwalk, CA 90652 USA
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may call it a love-sickness. Love is both the pain and pleasure of a mourning heart, it is love that wounds, and love that heals ; it is both the weapon and the oil; this sorrow hath its joy, the melted is the most joyful heart; it is love that makes it sad, it therefore weeps because it loves, and it is love that makes it glad too; it therefore joys because in its sorrows it sees it loves. It is love that makes the wound, the matter of this sorrow being love abused; what hast thou done soul ? whom hast thou despised ? against whom hast thou lifted up thyself? Thou hast sinned, thou hast sinned, and hast thereby smitten and grieved thy God that loves thee, and whom thou lovest. Thou hast but one friend in heaven and earth, and him thou hast abused ; to pleasure thy lust, thou hast pierced thy Lord, thou hast transgressed His commandments, and trampled upon his compassion; hast broken his bonds, and kicked at his compassion; his greatness and his goodness; his law and his very love hath been despised by thee; him who loved thee hast thou smitten. Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Oh vile, ungracious, unkind, unthankful, unnatural heart ; what hast thou done ?

Put all this now together, and you have the heart of flesh which the covenant promises, a tender heart, a heart that is tender of sin and duty, that carefully shuns sin, or is sure to smart for it ; that neither slights sin nor duty; that says not of the one or the other, It is but a little one ; that can feel sufferings, but not fret at them : a tender conscience, that will neither wink at sin, nor excuse the sinner; that will not hold the sinner guiltless, nor say unto the wicked, Thou art righteous ; that will not be

flowers quickly turn to thorns; it pricks the heart. how much soever it pleased the eye. It ordinarily enters by the eye and often runs out the same way it came in ; runs out in tears. When he thought thereon, he wept. At least, it warns and makes more watchful after. Thou seest what it is, take heed ; take it for a warning, and do no more. The pain of sin, if it do not force a tear, it will set a watch.

2. *Of duty.* A tender heart will neither slight a sin, nor neglect a duty. It is loath to grieve and offend, and careful to serve and please the Lord. It would not that he should suffer by it, nor so much as lose his due. It watches against sin, and unto duty. It cares how to please the Lord, and its care is tender. It would not displease by its neglects or performances; all must be done that ought, and as it ought to be done. It will neither stand out with its offering, nor will it offer an unclean thing. It considers not only what, but how, Both matter and matter, substance and circumstance, all must be right, or it is not at ease. It will keep time, and as much as may be, keep touch with the Lord in every point. It is not satisfied that it prays sometimes, it would not lose a praying time. God will not, and it cannot lose a duty. It would neither lose by non-performance, nor lose what is performed. It would neither leave undone, nor do amiss; any failing, not only in the matter, but in the principle, end, affection, intention ; any failing pains.

3. *In point of suffering.* A soft heart will not be careful, what, or how much, but why and upon what account, he suffers. Will neither sinfully shun the cross, nor run upon it unwarrantably. He waits for a call, and then follows.

He is patient under the hand of the Lord, but not insensible; can be touched with an affliction, though not offended at it. "The hand of the Lord hath touched me." He suffers more than his own, his brethren's sufferings. His brethren's burdens all lie on his shoulders. He weeps in their sorrows, bleeds in their wounds, his heart is bound in their chains. As the care, so the trouble of all the churches comes daily upon him. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?" he espouses all the sufferings of Christ as his own. In all his afflictions he is afflicted." Tenderness may be distinguished in respect of the subject of it; and so there is a tenderness of the conscience, the will, the affections.

1. Tenderness of conscience stands in these three things.
1. Clearness of judgment. 2. quickness of sight.
3. Uprightness or faithfulness.

1. *Clearness of judgment.* When it is well instructed, and understands the rule, and can thence discern betwixt good and evil. There is a tenderness that proceeds from cloudiness; scrupulosity, that fears every thing, stumbles at straws, starts at shadows; quarrels at duties; and so sometimes dares not please for fear of offending God. This is the sickness, or soreness of conscience, not its soundness. It is the sound conscience that is truly tender.

2. *Quickness of sight,* and watchfulness. I sleep, but my heart waketh. It can espy the least sins, and smallest duties. It can see sin in the very temptation, it can discover the least sin under the fairest face, and the least duty under the foulest vice. Call it singularity, nicety, cloud it with reproaches; yet conscience can discover light shining through all the clouds; duty within,

walks, converses, works, recreates himself, with a trembling heart and jealous eye.

[2.] In its caution. Fear is wary; some commanders have set their scout-watches unarmed, that fear might make them watchful. A fearful Christian will take heed what and whom he trusts; he dares not trust himself in such company as may be a snare unto him. He dares not trust his heart among temptations, he will keep the devil at a distance, he will not come near where his nets do lie. Blessed is he that thus feareth always. Oh the unspeakable mischief! Oh the multitudes of sins that we run upon, through our secure hearts! I never thought of it, I never dreamed of any such danger. Oh I am undermined, I am over-reached, I am surprised; my foot is in the snare, the gin hath taken me by the heel, my soul is among lions, sin hath gotten hold on me, my heart is gone ere I was aware, the enemy hath come in and carried it away, hath given it to lust, to the world, to pleasure, to divide it amongst themselves, my faith hath failed, my conscience is defiled, my love is grown cold, my grace withered, my comforts wasted, my peace broken! and thy God, Oh where is he gone? Woe is me, the evil that I feared not is come upon me; had I feared, I had not fallen: Oh that I had been wise, bad kept my watch, had stood upon thy guard I had thought I had escaped this danger. Oh Christians be wise in season, and take heed of the fool's too late "had I known it."

(3.) *There is a tenderness of sorrow.* Sorrow is the melting of the heart, the stone dissolved, sorrow is the wound of the heart, a wound is tender, love is tender, and therefore godly sorrow, which is the sorrow of love; you

be chaste, would not bestow itself elsewhere; and yet is in great jealousy, it may be enticed and drawn away. He that loves the Lord, there is not any thing, whether wife, or child, or friend, or estate, or esteem, that gets near his heart, but he is jealous of them, lest they steal it away. Get you down, keep you lower, this heart is neither yours nor mine; O my God, it is thine, it is thine Lord, take it wholly to thee, keep it to thyself, let no other lovers be sharers with thee.

(2.) There is a tenderness of fear. The tender heart is a trembling heart : the tenderness of fear is manifested in its suspicion, and caution.

[1.] In its suspicion. The fearful are suspicious they look further than they see ; he that is in dread, will be in doubt what may befall him, he suspects a surprisal ; every bush is a thief, every bait he fears may have a hook under. There is a foolish and a causeless fear, and there is a prudent and a holy fear; this fear is a principle of wisdom, Psa.cxi. 10. " The prudent man foreseeeth the evil," 144 Prov. xxii. 3. but fools go on; the snare is never nearer, than to the secure; bold, venturous sinners never want woe, the devil may spare his cunning, when he hath to do with such. Nothing that looks like sin offers itself to a tender heart, but he presently suspects it ; every pleasant morsel, every pleasant cup, every pleasant companion that comes, anything that tickles and gratifies the flesh, he looks through it ere he will touch it, lest it betray his soul from God. There may be a snare in the dish, a snare in my cup, a snare in my company; and what if there should? He feeds himself with fear, dwells,

whatsoever unhandsome face it be presented in, the former stands in consciences understanding the rule, as was said, this in strait applying the rule to cases : and distinguishing them by it. The truly tender hath his eyes in his head; and his eyes open, to discover and discern all that comes, be it good or evil, little or great. If but a thought comes in, What comes there? says conscience; what art thou? a friend or an enemy? whence art thou? From God, or from beneath? It will examine whatever knocks, before any free admission.

Oh what a crowd of evils do thrust into loose and careless hearts; the devil comes in with the crowd, and is never discovered. If the eye be either dim or asleep, there is entrance for anything. Little do we think oftimes, who hath been with us, what losses and mischief we have sustained, while our hearts have been asleep; which, had they been wakeful and watchful, might have been prevented.

(3.) *Uprightness and faithfulness*: which discovers itself, 1. In giving charge concerning duty; 2 In giving warning of sin; 3. In giving check for sin when committed.

[1.] In giving charge concerning duty. Look to it soul, there is a duty before thee, which God calls thee to; do not say, It is no great hurt to let it alone, it is no great hurt to do it, it is questionable whether it be a duty or not ; many wiser than I think otherwise. Do not say, It is a nicety, it is but a punctilio, it is mere folly and preciseness; and there will be no end of standing upon such small matters ; see to it, it is thy duty, beware thou neglect it not; the balking of the least duty, is the

neglecting of the great God of glory. [2.] In giving warning of sin. Take heed to thyself, sin lies at the door, thou art under a temptation, the devil is entering upon thee. Do not say, it is but a little sin ; as little as it is, there is death and hell in it; look to it, it is sin, have thou nothing to do with it, keep thyself pure, and though it run upon thee, shake it off. [3] After commission, it gives check for it; reproving, judging, and lashing the soul for it." Where hast thou been Gehazi?" say not, thou hast been nowhere; went not this heart with thee, and saw thee running after thy covetousness, gadding after thy pleasures, feeding thy pride, dandling thy lusts, playing, the hypocrite, playing the harlot from thy God, pampering thy flesh, pleasing thine appetite? and where hast thou been? What hast thou done, soul? Think not to excuse or mince the matter, it cannot be excused; thou hast sinned against thy God, and now bear thy shame. This is our heart smiting us, 2 Sam. xxiv. 10. our heart condemning us; "If our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things.." I John iii.20.

2. *Tenderness of the will*, that stands in its flexibility, and pliability to the will of God. And this is that tenderness wherein chiefly stands the blessing of a soft heart; a hard heart is stubborn and obstinate. Thy neck is as an iron sinew, and thy brow brass. Thou wilt not be ruled, there is no bending thee, or turning thee out of thy course, thine iron is too hard for the fire, it will not be melted; and for the hammer, it will not be broken; there is no dealing with thee, thou art an untractable piece, thou wilt go neither led nor driven ; thy heart is set in

displeased, and provoked, so God smiles, it is well enough. Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and my heart shall be glad, Psa. iv. "Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled," Psa. xxx. 7. Let him correct me, but oh not in fury; let him smite, but not frown; let him kill me, so he will but love me. And though he smite, though he kill me, yet will I love and trust in him. O my God, let me rather die in thy love, than live in thy displeasure; there is life in that death, this life is death to me. Let me not be dead whilst alive; turn away thine anger which kills my heart. It is impatient of divine displeasure, and thence it is grievous to it that it does displease ; thence it quarrels with sin, and falls so foul with itself for it.

Is this thy kindness to thy friend ? lovest thou God, soul? what! and yet provoke him thus daily? love! and yet neglect to seek and follow thy God? love! and yet so lame and so slow, and so heavy, and so sparing in thy services to him? Is this all thy love will do ? not deny thine ease, or thy pleasure, or thy liberty, or thine appetite, or thy companion, for the sake of the Lord ? choose rather to pleasure thy friend, or thy flesh, than to please God? Is this thy love? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Oh false heart, Oh unworthy, unworthy spirit! how canst thou look thy God in the face ? How canst thou say I love thee, when thy heart is no more with him ?

[2.] *In its jealousy*. He that loves the Lord is jealous, and jealousy hath a tender edge; he is jealous not of, but for the Lord, not of his God, but of himself, lest any thing should steal away his heart from God. Love would

does. Our love can add nothing to him " Can a man be profitable to God ?" Job xxii. 2. If thou be righteous, what do you give Him? Chap 35:7. Yet thought it can add nothing, it would not that anything, be detracted from him ; whilst he can have no more, it would that he should have his own, all that is due, his due praise, his due honor, and homage, and worship, and subjection, from every creature; it would have no abatement, not the least spot or stain upon all his glory. What is an affront to God, is an offense to love. Love beareth all things," saith the apostle, I Cor. xiii. 7. all things from God, all things from men. And yet there are two things the love of God cannot bear,-his dishonor-his displeasure. His dishonor. Love would have God to be God, to live in the glory of his majesty, in the hearts and eyes of all the world. His reproach is grievous to him that loves, for this is the cloud that takes God out of all He loves and honors, and would that God should be loved and honored of me continually, while they daily say unto me, Where is thy God?" Psa. xlii. 3. Where is that care, and help, and that salvation of thy God, thou trustedst in ? Thy God is not such a one as thou boastedst him to be: when I remember, when I bear such things, my soul is poured out within me. Love is large; he that loves hath a large heart, he can never receive or do too much ; he would have all he can, and he would give all he hath to the Lord. He is tender how any thing be withheld that is due, how anything be wasted elsewhere, that might be useful to the Lord. *His displeasure.* The displeasure of men it bears and rejoices ; the wrath and rage of Satan, it bears and triumphs ; though all the world, and hell to boot, be

thee to do evil, thy will is set upon sin, and thou art set upon thine own will. The word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not do, but we will do whatsoever proceeds out of our own mouth; we will do what we will do, Jer. xliiv 16, 17. " Who is Lord over us ?" Psa. xii. 4. And Jer. ii.25. Thou saidst, "there is no hope:" no, for we have loved strangers, and after them we will go, come what will of it, say what thou wilt against it; be silent, scriptures; hold thy peace, conscience; it is to no purpose to speak more, there is no hope of prevailing; we are at a point, we will take our own course. These are *bad hearts, stubborn, obstinate hearts.* When the, iron sinew is broken, when the rebellion and stubbornness of the spirit is subdued and tamed. and made gentle and pliable, then it becomes a tender heart. There may be some tenderness in the conscience, and yet the will be a very stone ; and as long as the will stands out, there is no broken heart. Conscience may be scared and frightened. Conscience may fly upon the sinner, What dost thou mean soul? whither are thy rebellions carrying thee? Look to thyself, hearken, or thou wilt be lost ere thou art aware. But however God hath gotten conscience on his side, yet the devil still rides the will ; and there sin takes up its rest. There is a double resting of sin in the soul: in peace, and in power.

(1.) *In peace;* when it dwells and rules in the soul without disturbance or contradiction; when it carries all smoothly before it. When God lets it alone, and conscience speaks not a word against it; when notwithstanding those armies of lusts, fighting against the soul, there is not so much as

one weapon lifted up against them ; not a prayer, nor a tear, nor a wish for freedom, nor the least fear concerning the issue ; this is the most dreadful hardness.

(2.) *In power*: when, though it can have no peace, yet it hath still a place in the heart. Though it can have no quiet, but conscience is still quarrelling with it, and warning it away, yet it still holds its power over the will; the master of the house is content to be its servant. Oh how many persons are there, even amongst the professors of religion, who cannot sin in quiet: they are proud, or passionate, or intemperate, or covetous, or false in their words, in their dealings; they are formal, and hypocritical, and slight in their duties, but they cannot go out with it with any quiet. Conscience smites them for it, they feel many a pang and deadly twinge in their heart, insomuch that sometimes they cry, and groan, and roar in their spirits, Oh for redemption, Oh for deliverance from this false, this proud, this covetous and wicked heart! And yet after all this, the will remains a captive Still, sin holds its power there, though it cannot carry it on in peace, though it cannot be proud, or play the hypocrite, or be covetous, or an oppressor, without some galls, and gripes in the soul, yet on it goes, the same trade is kept up, the same course is held on. God commands, Cast ye out, cast ye out, come off from all your wickedness and evil ways, and I will receive you: no, though conscience would, the will cannot come, whatever rending and tearing; whatever terrors, and torments, and worrying such souls are at any time under; whatever stings, and plagues, and fires, they find their sins to be in their souls and bones ; whatever wishing

and mouldings they wring forth, that they were well rid of these plagues; whilst the will is still from them, there is a hard heart, desperately hard; there is none of this heart of flesh. When the will is once broken loose from sin; when it will be content to let all go, and give up itself to the dominion of the Lord, there is a broken heart. Now speak Lord, and I will hear. Now call Lord, and I will answer. Now command me, impose on me what thou wilt, I will submit. None but the Lord; none but Christ ; no other Lord nor lover. I am thine, Lord, thine own, do with thine own, demand of thine own, whatever thou pleases. What God will have me be, what God will have me do, that will I do, and be. No not what I will, but the will of the Lord be done. When it is come to this, there is a tender heart ; there is the blessing of a broken spirit ; the stone He hath taken away, He hath given . Christians, never trust to tears, never talk of terrors, trouble of conscience, of the passionate workings and meltings, which at any time you feel upon your spirits, though there be something in these, as you shall see more by and by; yet these are not the things you are to look at. A subdued, tractable, willing, obedient heart, that is the tender heart. " If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land ; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be slain with the sword; the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it," Is. 1:19

3. *Tenderness of the affections*. I shall instance only in three; namely, love, fear, sorrow.

(1.) The tenderness of love. This is seen in its benevolence and in its jealousy-, [I.] In its benevolence. Our goodness extends not to the Lord, but our good will