

RENEWED - Week 2 (A New Heart)

Ezekiel 11:19, 36:22-27, Philippians 1:6

INTRODUCTION:

RENEWED Series - Week 2

- Last week - through Isaiah, God is making ALL THINGS NEW!
- What's next is better, and it begins in me!

Many of you are joining us today, and not only are you unsure about what you believe about God, you may have no idea how he impacts our lives. This conversation is for you too. We're going to unpack a simple, yet the life-changing way that God can make a difference in your life. Christian or non-Christian, we all know what someone means when they say, 'He/she broke my heart. Or, my heart hurts for you. Or, he/she has a tender heart. Even if you're not familiar with the Bible, you'll find you're quite familiar with what the Bible has to say about this thing called, our heart.

We start the practical journey together today - what are some of the things within us God wants to renew, to remake?

- Definition of a Disciple - "...one who is constantly being changed by Jesus." We are to live in a consistent state of renewal, of being made new...it's not just a one-time salvation prayer, but a daily dying to self and being raised to a new life in Christ in all areas of life...a pursuit, a life-long adventure with Jesus!

If you have your Bibles/Smartphones, turn to **Ezekiel 36** - back to the words of a prophet...gotta love the prophets! Ezekiel is a prophet called by God - and given the "scroll" to eat in Ezekiel 3 - he is told to go and communicate the message of God to the Israelites, but also told that they will undoubtedly not receive it because of their hard hearts. (3:7). He even tells the prophet to allow His words to sink deep into his heart first before he proclaims them to the people - be transformed personally before you expect to communicate corporately. Ezekiel's prophecies are unique in that he's somewhat of a personal illustration - God actually makes an object lesson from Ezekiel's story over and over again (he gets tied up and tongue tied, he has to draw a depiction of the city on a brick, he has to lie on his side at one point for over a year due to the sins of the people, he has to use cow dung for fire fuel, he had to shave his head with a sword and divide his hair into 3 equal parts for 3 different reasons...unique to this prophet).

Let's set up the words from the prophet - what's happening up to this point in God's people, the Israelites? *Severe idolatry*: Israel's unfaithfulness, turning to idols, worshipping other gods, giving their hearts to things that cannot satisfy - all of this infuriated God. God despised it then and detests it now...it hurts his heart and offends him. Throughout the OT this is called the prostitution of the human heart (Ezekiel 16:30ff). It is the giving of a heart to that which is not intended.

So the words of Ezekiel were written directly to God's people – but the parallel is there, this is the pre-condition of humanity...we are all conditioned to give our hearts to things that cannot satisfy; the bible calls this idolatry. Our hearts are designed to be in relationship with only ONE God, but that sin gets in our way often, doesn't it? It was in them, and it's in us – so we need to hear the words of God from the Scripture, not simply as a historical story, but as a modern-day call to all of us. You got it?

Ezekiel 36:22-27

[ILLUSTRATION - The Quarry Trip]

- Classes of Rock

Class A rock – highly valuable in construction, but when it comes to our heart...a hard heart, a heart of stone is a very dangerous building material. It's contrary to what God designed us to experience. Let's talk about the human heart for a moment...

The heart is where our value system lies, it is where conviction rests, it is the epicenter of all we hold dear. The term "heart" in scripture is a reference to the inner man...the soul and spirit of humanity. The heart is more the man than any of the other faculties and powers God has attached to the nature of man (Spurgeon). True renewal/regeneration resulting in true relationship begins at the heart level of humanity. Listen to Jesus' words to his disciples in Luke 6:

"A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thorn bushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. A good person produces good things from the **treasury of a good heart**, and an evil person produces evil things from the **treasury of an evil heart**. What you say flows from what is in your heart." – Luke 6:43-45 NLT. Your heart is a treasury and looks one of two ways – it's good or evil, it's a heart of stone or a heart of flesh, it's a hard heart, or a renewed heart – and God's transformative work begins with your heart...your treasury.

HEART OF STONE (Hard Heart):

A heart of stone is a term that really points to the affections of humanity. A heart of stone is to say that my heart runs toward things that are quite literally dead in the realm of God's Spirit.

A heart of stone is often seen in the way we process an offense, for example. When someone hurts us, offends us...we often play and replay that video in our heart and it's on repeat constantly...NOT good if we are attempting to remain open to the Lord, or the people around us. It leads to a hard heart. *A hard heart doesn't forgive and rarely forgets.*

What about the temptation to quit? To walk away? To lose the faith and throw in the towel? What about the temptation to give yourself the permission to wave your flag of surrender as you are crumbling under the weight of concerns? A hard heart doesn't submit to circumstances believing that God is teaching through pain, but rather believes God is punishing through pain. *A hard heart doesn't learn from pain. A quick thought on pain...*

“Pain is a watershed: it can cause us to shrink back into a hole and hope it goes away, or it can galvanize new hopes, new plans, and new passions to learn the lessons it can teach us. Only dead people and resurrected people feel no pain.” - Samuel Chand

Don't try to weave a life of pain free living...that's not the key to a renewed heart. The critical component is finding purpose in and through the pain (Congressman McCaul). Allow God to redeem it, to reconcile it, to restore you in it, to prepare you with it.

If you believe that God is God, and you operate within that single boundary, all situations, come what may, can renew you. If you believe that life is about you, about your accomplishments, your influence, then all situations, come what may, can lead to a hard heart. What will be said of you in your current situation? God wants to renew you. He wants to take your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh - to give you a NEW heart, to RENEW your heart...will you let him?

Look back at verse 22 - God wants to bring you back through a renewal of your heart...a replacement (stone for flesh). He regenerates and renews our hearts by grace, through no merit of our own - and upon receiving that grace, the heart moves from being one of the most calloused, darkened, and evil facilities of humanity, to being one of the softest, most loving, and life-giving life forces in all of creation. The heart is a powerful thing. So what does a renewed heart look like?

HEART OF FLESH (Renewed Heart):

A RENEWED HEART IS A TENDER HEART

A Heart of Flesh is SENSITIVE and RESPONSIVE. IT is in tune with the desires of God above its own desires. If the Kingdom of God is the range of his effective rule- does he rule your heart or do you? The Kingdom of God is organized around God's desire. "The world and its desires are passing away but he who does the will of God will live forever." 1 John 2:17. What are some ways you would say you're doing the will of God?

It's hard to be practical in this, but I think a huge value would be helping us face some of our idols and "desires" that are keeping us from living with a renewed heart. You stated that God renews our heart as we bring a responsive heart. I would continue to unpack what that would look like- "obedience". Not just waiting from a magic sign from heaven but to begin obeying things he's already told us. To love people, love his word, basically we need a heart that loves what God loves and hates the things that God hates.

First of all - tenderness. Grace is the ONLY force that leads to this regenerative work. Our world is a stone magnet. We are growing harder and harder as the days, weeks, months, and years progress. The heart of flesh can ONLY come from the Father, and our yielding all rights over to the unmerited favor and grace of the Father. He is the transformative work in the human heart. You and I cannot do it on our own.

The heart of flesh, a tenderness toward God begins with complete surrender and submission to God. Underneath the weight of the gospel, I am brought low - I see my sin, my

propensity to a hardened heart, and I yield my rights, I yield my understanding, I yield my will to the person of Jesus who died in my place. I don't enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, but instead I reject sin from my love for my Savior. Every day, his grace and gospel draw me in, drawing me to a softened state, draws me to a tenderness of heart - that's renewal, that's regeneration, that's replacement.

There's an interesting moment here where God could have also been referring to the covenant made - that he would actually make a new covenant with them - not written on stone (heart of stone) but written on their hearts (heart of flesh). It's a window to the gospel that I find super interesting. The next phrase in the passage is that he would put His Spirit in them - again, pointing to life with the Advocate, the Person of the Holy Spirit ruling and guiding their lives. The law would no longer define the relationship between God and man, but the Spirit inside, through the blood of the Son, Jesus, would be the defining factor.

A heart of stone is a heart that rejects God, it continues to sin against God, yes. But if you peel back another layer to what is being said, you will see that a hard heart is also a heart that trusts in something other than God's grace and mercy to save. That is a heart of stone...it's a law based, shame oriented, performance driven relationship with God - Matt Roberson's biggest struggle as a follower of Jesus.

It is my daily fight...not to live as if God is ashamed of me, but that through the power of Jesus, that he is fully accepting of me! God is removing my heart of stone and replacing it, renewing it, and giving me a heart of flesh!

Your heart is hardening or softening each and every day...there's no in between. A renewed heart is a tender heart...we see people as God sees people. A tender heart loves what God loves. A tender heart feels pain but finds purpose in pain to draw me closer to the Father. No more measuring up...but by God's grace alone (verse 22) living in full acceptance...a renewed heart is a tender heart.

A RENEWED HEART IS A RESPONSIVE HEART

Responsiveness is about tempo - it's about how quickly we respond to God's voice, his chastening, his discipline, his whispers...when conviction comes, a responsive heart repents quickly. When the Holy Spirit chastens and disciplines, a responsive heart responds immediately or at least quickly.

This is literal regeneration. Jesus is right in front of me, waiting for me to be ready - no condemnation, no impatience, no lack in any way...just ready to renew my heart. I don't need to fear Jesus' regenerative work - it's best for me, and it's born out of his unwavering love of and for me. Because I believe I can trust God, then I respond to His leading...think of a high-performance sports car with amazing "responsiveness" in its handling. Each little nudge here or there and the car does exactly what the driver expects...this is a great image for us as followers of Jesus - how do we respond. Is he even driving our hearts?

Things that harden the human heart:

- Too much success
- Affliction and pain
- Exposure to sin over and over again
- Rejection of the Gospel

*"We've been surrounded and battered by troubles, but we're not demoralized; we're not sure what to do, but we know that God knows what to do; we've been spiritually terrorized, but God hasn't left our side; we've been thrown down, but we haven't broken. What they did to Jesus, they do to us—trial and torture, mockery and murder; what Jesus did among them, he does in us—he lives! Our lives are at constant risk for Jesus' sake, which makes Jesus' life all the more evident in us. While we're going through the worst, you're getting in on the best! So, we're not giving up. How could we! **Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace.** These hard times are small potatoes compared to the coming good times; the lavish celebration prepared for us. There's far more here than meets the eye. The things we see now are here today, gone tomorrow. But the things we can't see now will last forever." - 2 Corinthians 4:7-12, 16-18 MSG*

This is the posture of a renewed heart! God wants to renew your heart, to make you new. Embrace the change! Pray this with me, God, make me new!