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"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psalm 139:23-34.

Introduction: This psalm begins with a declaration and ends in supplication. David begins with the statement that God had searched and prays for God to search him. He begs God to do what he knows God has already done. But it is not exactly a repetition. He recognizes and acknowledges God's omniscience, that nothing can be hid from him. The prayer is a confession of sin and supplication for sin to be discovered to the prayer that it may be shunned and overcome. David was not praying for God to learn something about him, but that God may discover to him the condition of his heart. David wants God's help in the task of self-examination. The prayer is a cry for purity.

David wants God to play the role of a diagnostician, not of the body but of the soul. David was concerned about soul prosperity. He wanted God to search him and discover to him his sins. He wanted to know more fully the condition of his heart. The word here for search means to dig, to dig deep. David wanted no mere surface examination. He wanted his heart laid open so everything in it could be known. Spurgeon said: "We all understand the figure of a search. There is a search warrant out against some man who is supposed to be harboring a traitor in his house. The officer goes into the lower rooms...looks into every closet, descends into the cellar. Upstairs he goes."

David is not challenging God to

find anything wrong in his heart. He is not saying, search me, and find any wrong in me if you can. It is the if of humility and confession, not the if of doubt and presumption. It is not the prayer of a self-righteous person, but rather the prayer of a self-confessed sinner. David knew God could find much wrong in his heart and he wanted God to show it to him. He did not want to rest in ignorance of his state. Oh, the people with whom ignorance is bliss as it relates to sin—they have a kind of happiness because they are ignorant of the state of their heart and of their awful danger before the moral Lawgiver of this world.

Sin has power to hide itself. Sin never exposes itself; it must be exposed by God. Saving conviction is of the Holy Spirit. Sin never says, Here I am, take a good look at me, and see what a terrible and dangerous thing I am. Sin disguises itself. It has the power of camouflage. It is a thing of beauty and pleasure. The Bible talks about the pleasures of sin and the deceitfulness of sin. But the Spirit of God can rob sin of its mask. God can tear off the tinsel and show what a horrible thing sin is. The human heart is deceitful because it is sinful. The hope of conviction and conversion is in God who searches the heart and tries the reins of men.

The desire to know oneself is not natural. Self-examination is not easy. The desire to know oneself is a grace-created desire. David wanted to explore the recesses of his own heart. This is not the prayer or desire of the unregenerate. It proves David to be a man

after God's own heart. Can you think of Hitler or Napoleon offering such a prayer?

The man who does not know his sins will not make much progress in holiness. Sin must be known if there is to be a struggle against it. There is no cure for gossip until the gossip sees the sin of it. "A forward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends," Proverbs 16:28. "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly," Proverbs 18:8. "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth," Proverbs 26:20. A man will not make much headway against foul talk until he sees the sin of it. Covetousness is rarely ever cured because very few ever see any sin in it.

David is concerned about three things: his heart, his thoughts, and his way. He wants his heart searched, for out of it are the issues of life. He wants his thoughts tried or tested that he may know them. He wants God to show him the truth about his thoughts, because our thoughts are hidden from men. We trifle with them and let them run riot. We need to see that God is concerned with our thoughts. He understands our thoughts afar off.

There is not the distinction in the Bible between our heart and our thoughts that we make in modern speech. We make the heart the seat of the emotions and affections, and associate our thoughts with the head. But in the soul the heart is the center of personal being and out of it there comes not only emotions

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AN APPEAL FOR CONSECRATION

BY: C. D. COLE

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service," Romans 12:1.

Every true pastor wants his church to have a worthy program. He wants every member to develop in the grace of giving and grow in the knowledge of the truth. He wants to see his members forsake worldly things and bear fruit to the glory of God. Like Paul the true pastor, the man with a shepherd heart, does not think so much about a gift for himself, but he wants his people to have fruit to their account before God. *"Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account,"* Philippians 4:17.

A worthy program costs. A worthy program is expensive. Many church members see how little their religion can cost them. But this is an awful spirit to have. The church of the living God is not a Cheap Henry store. The Christian who sees how little he can spend for the cause of Christ has a little dried up soul. *"The liberal soul shall be made fat,"* Proverbs 11:25. A fat soul is better than a fat bank roll.

The Bible lays special emphasis on giving. It stresses the importance of honoring the Lord with our substance and the firstfruits of our increase. Take all the Bible has to say about giving away and you would have a shorter Bible indeed.

THE PASTOR'S METHOD OF GETTING THE CHURCH TO PUT ON A WORTHY PROGRAM:

1. Some wrong methods that are often employed:

a. **The scolding method.** Some scold and quarrel and nag their members into giving. They try to create sympathy for themselves--tell how near they are to starvation, this is a poor method. A church cannot be worthily financed out of sympathy for their pastor. When a church is run on sympathy it will drag. We sympathize with the leg-

less beggar on the street and may toss him a nickel or a dime. But you cannot run a church on sympathy.

b. **The Pharisees plan.** Some pastors work up a system of human awards to keep their people interested. They offer banners, buttons, and other trinkets. They give publicity and praise to those who will give. This method appears to be successful. You can get more money but you are ruining the motive of giving. You are creating a spirit of selfishness and pride. You are getting the people to give to be seen of men rather than to honor God. We are told in the Bible to do all things heartily as unto the Lord. This was the method of the Pharisees.

c. **The begging plan.** Beg the public or the board, beg anywhere and everywhere.

d. **The bazaar plan.** The church goes into the merchandise business, sells old clothes, or has a pie supper or ice cream supper, or an old rag sale.

PAUL'S PLAN:

"I beseech you by the mercies of God..." He held up God's mercies before their eyes and appealed to their sense of gratitude. Give from a grateful heart. He would have them give because of a push within than from a pull without. In Romans he had taken man as a lost, depraved and helpless sinner, worthy of death and had shown how God in infinite mercy had saved him and made him secure.

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice: allusion the sacrificial system under the Old Testament. The believer is a priest, but his sacrifices are not the same as the believer of the Old Testament. The Old Testament believer sacrificed dead animals. The New Testament believer is to sacrifice a living body. He is to give himself.

In presenting his body to God there are two kinds of sacrifices: *"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that*

is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased," Hebrews 13:15-16. Praise and giving: lip and hand. With the lip we sing God's praises; with the hand we work and support God's church. Other scriptures on the sacrifice of money: *"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things,"* Galatians 6:6. *"Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only,"* Philippians 4:15. *"That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate,"* 1 Timothy 6:18.

SOME EXAMPLES OF NEW TESTAMENT GIVING:

1. The church of Macedonia. (1)They were poor. The Romans had lacerated Macedonia, the country had been greatly reduced. (2)They were liberal--gave beyond their ability. (3)They were willing--Begged for the privilege of giving.

It seems that Paul had not urged them to give because they were so poor, but they insisted on giving. They surprised Paul. They gave more than he expected. The secret of their liberality: gave their own selves to the Lord. When people really consecrate themselves to God they will not plead their poverty as the reason for not giving.

I was once told of a man in a church who said to his pastor one day; "I cannot give to your support for you are better off than I am." The pastor replied that he had better resign. He said, "I am keeping you from doing your duty. If you had a poor pastor you would give to his support and thus get a blessing. I am doing you an injury in staying on as your pastor. I said it is more blessed to give than to receive and if I am keeping you from giving, I'll resign." You can give without love, but

there is no love without giving.

"And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites," Luke 21:2. *"And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing,"* Mark 12:42. In the Lord's day they had a treasury box. Christ one day sat close to it and observed the people as they gave. He saw men cast big amounts into it, and after a while he saw a poor widow, a woman who had to support herself by her own labours. He saw her put in two mites, and he turned to his disciples and said, "She has given more than anybody else. She has given all her living." Christ measures the gift by what is left and not by what is actually given. Others had given more in dollars and cents, but they had something left. She had nothing left. She gave all her living. She put God before her own stomach. Some say they cannot give because they have to live first. This woman said God's cause must prosper, that is more important than my life.

A man once talked with his neighbor. He said I can't give my pastor anything because he is better off than I am. His neighbor agreed that it might be so. The man went on to say that his pastor had more to eat than he had. The neighbor did not know about that. He thought both the man and his pastor had plenty to eat. The neighbor said, "Do you believe in paying your grocer?" "Oh! yes," said the man, "I'm honest." "Does not your grocer have more than you have?" "Yes." "Does he not set a better table than you do?" "Oh! yes," said the man. "Then why pay him and not pay the pastor? Is it more honorable to pay for physical food than to pay for spiritual food?"

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and loves, but there are also thoughts and intents of the heart. David wanted the thoughts that came out of his heart put in the furnace to be tried so they could be known. Somebody has said, This is an awful prayer. When we ask God to try us, we are asking for the furnace. If we are sincere in such a prayer, we may expect sorrow, some painful experiences, that will reveal the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The next petition is a longing for the casting out of evil. If there be any wicked way in me, expose my wickedness so that I may get free from it.

The word here rendered wicked literally means "forced labor." In olden times and in some countries still, the authorities will lay hold upon men and put them to forced labor. That is what we hear so much about in concentration camps, men are forced to labor without pay or purpose. Forced labor is grievous and comes to mean sorrow. So the way of wickedness is the way of compulsory service and ends in sorrow. That is the way of saying that all sin is slavery and has a bitter end. The lost man is Satan's slave. All the freedom he has is a delusion. David realized there is still sin in him. The heart is the workshop where wicked thoughts are manufactured--wicked thoughts lead to wicked ways. David believes the wicked ways God sees, God will help him overcome.

God left Hezekiah to try him. *"Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to inquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart,"* II Chronicles 32:31.

The man who lives here for God will live yonder as he has lived here, only more completely and more joyously forever. God will punish or reward us by making us eternally what we have

tried to be here. Shall we try to point out some of the wicked ways to which we are all prone by nature?

There is the way of unbelief. To believe God is a sign of regeneration. Unbelief is the besetting sin of the human race. There is the way of selfishness which belongs to the natural man and has to be striven against in the regenerate man. Selfishness is self-love to the exclusion of God and our fellowman. There is the way of sluggishness in spiritual things, apathy in prayer and study of God's word; the way of worldliness, many pleasures, worldly honor, etc.; the way of self-dependence in which God is ignored and dishonored. There is the way of disobedience in which we often walk.

This prayer is asking God to probe our hearts, put us in the furnace, and cure us of our wickedness. He is the diagnostician and healer of our souls.

The whole process is painful here, but it has its end and issue in glory. Brethren, my hope of progress in holiness is that I know at least some of my faults, or sins. I have been in the furnace for the trying of my thoughts.