

**David: Issues of the Heart**  
**Part 1**  
**A Complex Heart**  
**Pastor Charles Price**

Well Good Morning! If you have your Bible I am going to read to you from 1 Samuel Chapter 16. That's one of the Old Testament books. And there are Bibles in the seats hopefully everywhere, but certainly in most places. And if you don't have your own Bible (which I recommend you do), but if you don't have your own Bible then follow with me in one of those other Bibles.

1 Samuel Chapter 16. I want to look at some of the issues in the life of David over the next few weeks. We know David is the shepherd boy who became the king of Israel. And his name occurs in our Bibles over 1000 times. That is more than other of the great heroes of the Old Testament Scripture.

Moses gets 847 mentions. Abraham gets 290. But David gets just over 1000.

So he is a key man in the unfolding story that Scripture brings to us. And I want to read about his introduction to us in 1 Samuel Chapter 16. I am going to read the first 13 verses.

“The LORD said to Samuel,”

(Samuel, by the way, was the last of the judges and he was a prophet as well.)

“The LORD said to Samuel, ‘How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.’

“But Samuel said, ‘How can I go? Saul will hear about it and kill me.’

“The LORD said, ‘Take a heifer with you and say, “I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.”’

“Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.’

“Samuel did what the LORD said. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town trembled when they met him. They asked, ‘Do you come in peace?’

“Samuel replied, ‘Yes, in peace; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD. Consecrate yourselves and come to the sacrifice with me. Then he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

“When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, ‘Surely the LORD’S anointed stands here before the LORD.’

“But the LORD said to Samuel, ‘Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.’

“Then Jesse called Abinadab and had him pass in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, ‘The LORD has not chosen this one either.’

“Jesse then had Shammah pass by, but Samuel said, ‘Nor has the LORD chosen this one.’

“Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, ‘The LORD has not chosen these.’

“So he asked Jesse, ‘Are these all the sons you have?’

“‘There is still the youngest,’ Jesse answered, ‘but he is tending the sheep.’

“Samuel said, ‘Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives.’

“So he sent and had him brought in. He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.

“Then the LORD said, ‘Rise and anoint him; he is the one.’

“So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the LORD came upon David in power. Samuel then went to Ramah.”

That is as far as I am going to read but keep your Bible open there.

A common criticism that is made of Christians is that many of us are hypocrites. You hear that as a general statement made. “Christians are hypocrites.”

Many times what they mean is that what we believe is not working out in practice. Or worse, people assume we don’t really believe it at all; we’re just pretending that certain things are true.

But you know and I know that we are very complex people in ourselves and we find that what Paul says is true when he writes in Romans 7:18,

“I have the desire to do what is good but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this is what I keep on doing.”

And we know this internal battle that takes place in our hearts, the battle between the flesh and the Spirit, as Paul describes it in the Book of Galatians.

The great thing about Scripture is it always tells us the truth about its heroes. And David was a man who knew this battle as truly as anybody else here in this building this morning.

The Bible doesn't put its heroes in stain glassed windows and make them look pretty and dangle halos above their heads because that's not true, that's not the way life is.

That doesn't represent the battle and conflict that life itself becomes, and becomes so especially when you are in a relationship with God, when your appetite for righteousness, your desire for what is good, is heightened and your awareness of what is wrong is equally heightened. And we are in turmoil over this dilemma in our own hearts.

The first time David is mentioned in Scripture he is mentioned euphemistically, not by name, in 1 Samuel Chapter 13. Saul was the first and the present king over Israel. He had begun well but his trust in God had turned to belief in himself, a belief in his own abilities, and that led, predictably, to arrogance. That led to disobedience.

And Samuel had to come to him one day in Chapter 13 and Verse 14 and tell him,

“Your kingdom will not endure; the Lord has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD’S command.”

And so before David is ever mentioned, he is described to this man that he will be a man after God's own heart.

Now that word 'heart' is a very important one in the Scripture. It reoccurs about 570 times. And as far as I can see, it is never once speaking of the physical heart that is made up of ventricles and valves and veins and arteries.

Rather it is talking of the inner core of our lives, the action center of our lives, our psychological, emotional and spiritual heart. It is about our attitudes, our disposition, our feelings, our intentions. It is the action center of our lives.

You may call it our character, our personality. It's where we feel, where we dream, where we decide.

When a boy says to a girl, "I love you with all my heart," he cradles her head in his hands, he is not saying, "I love you with all my ventricles and veins and my aorta and my valves. I even love you with my cholesterol and my plaque. In fact I love you with all of my pump." That isn't what he is saying, is it?

He is saying, "I love you in the inner core of my mind, my emotions, my will. I love you in that action center of my life."

The Bible talks a lot about the heart. Here are a few examples. It says,

The thoughts of men's hearts were evil.

It says God's heart was filled with pain.

Pharaoh's heart was hardened.

People's hearts grew proud.

People are to love God with all their hearts.

Our hearts rejoice in the Lord.

Some hearts are wise, some hearts are glad.

People lose heart.

People know in their heart and think in their heart.

Out of the heart come evil thoughts.

Evil and good are both stored up in our hearts.

Your treasure is where your heart is.

Let not your hearts be troubled.

The secret of our hearts will be laid bare.

Love one another deeply from the heart.

Christ is to dwell in our hearts by faith.

And many, many, many more similar statements that talk about the actual core, deepest place in our being; that is what is referred to as our heart about 570 times in the whole of Scripture.

In our own English language we speak about people who are good in heart, or we learn things by heart, or someone has a heart of steel, or someone else has no heart, or someone has a broken heart. It is the epicenter of people's lives.

And our hearts are key to our beings because Jesus said in Luke 6:45,

“The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart.”

What is stored up in a person's heart is what comes out, what others see. In the next verse Jesus said,

“Out of the overflow of his heart the mouth speaks.”

Now every life has an external journey and an internal journey. The external journey is about what happens to us. You know, events and the flow of our lives.

The internal journey is about what happens in us; it has to do with our thoughts and our feelings and our aspirations.

And we have a unique insight into both of these journeys in David. His external journey, his life story comes to us in 59 chapters of the Old Testament – in 1 Samuel, in 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles. And we have got lots of detail about the external journey of David’s life.

But his internal journey comes to us in the Book of the Psalms. There are 150 psalms. 75 of them are attributed to David. And it is likely that many of the anonymous psalms also come from the pen and the heart of David.

And there you see not the events of his life, but the workings out of his heart.

If you follow the story line, his external world is both beautiful and broken. He is introduced as a man after God’s own heart. And yet he has to come to God in deep repentance and cry out to God, “Create in me a clean heart” because from being a man after God’s own heart, his heart plummets into the dirt and grime and has to be cleaned.

He wrote about delighting in the law of God and yet he willfully violated the law of God in several areas of his life.

Sometimes he is full of faith; sometimes he is full of fear. Sometimes he is confident; other times he is crushed. Sometimes he is compassionate; other times he is cruel.

And we all know this Jekyll and Hyde syndrome that we see in David’s life and that is in our lives in different ways as well.

But when we follow David’s internal will we find equally it is beautiful and broken at the same time.

The Psalms are full of conflicting emotions. I am grateful to an article by John Piper on the emotions in the Psalms. And there are negative emotions of loneliness, sorrow, regret, contrition, discouragement, turmoil, shame, fear, anger, grief, pain, broken heartedness. You find those coming out of the Psalms when you read them.

But there are the positive emotions too of awe and wonder and marvel and delight and joy and hope and gratitude and confidence and love.

We know that real life and the real Christian life is not all about celebration. It is also about mourning and weeping and grieving.

I pass a church often that announces for every Sunday morning a Sunday celebration. Well they may just be using that word fairly loosely, but if they are serious about that, they are either going to become unbalanced or deceitful, because sometimes we have to face issues that are hard and tough and demanding and painful.

And the Psalms show us the interior journey of David's life in both its agony and its ecstasy. And no one reads and knows our hearts as God does.

When Saul, David's predecessor, became the first king of Israel, God examined his heart. And in 1 Samuel 9:19 Samuel said to Saul,

“Go up ahead of me to the high place, for today you are to eat with me, and in the morning I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.”

That must have been a little embarrassing for Saul. If somebody came to me and said, “I want to tell you everything that is in your heart,” I would sit there very nervously.

Well Saul did too. And it was not a pretty heart. And so in the next chapter, 1 Samuel 10:9 it says,

“As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart.”

He did that deep surgery, deep into Saul's life. And then it says,

“The Spirit of God came upon him in power.”

And the people recognized that he was God's anointed.

And Saul had been anointed by God. Saul had been empowered by God. Saul had been directed by God. But something went wrong with Saul and his heart became corrupted.

And you find phrases in Saul's life like this: “terror filled his heart; his heart was filled with fear.”

You can trace a progression in Saul where his confidence in God had been replaced by this lack of confidence in himself. That became his reference point. And his heart of fear led to a heart of dishonesty, which led to a heart of disobedience, which led to a heart of cover up, which led to a heart of vengeance.

And eventually Saul is taken from the throne because he never had the heart surgery that he needed.

David could have gone the same way but he did go for the heart surgery that God alone would give him.

Now God seeks out a new king, a man after His own heart. And the first criterion for David is not going to be his military skills, it is not going to be his administrative abilities, it is not going to be his leadership qualities. The first criterion is going to be the state of his heart.

That's what God says "I am going to look for."

Now of course his military skills, his administrative skills, his leadership skills, all of these were to be important, but if his heart is not right, all those are cancelled out as being of value. It is his heart that he is going to be judged by.

And so in 1 Samuel 16 when we read just now,

"The LORD said to Samuel, 'How long will you mourn for Saul, since I have rejected him as king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; I am sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem. I have chosen one of his sons to be king.'"

And so in Verse 2,

"The LORD said, 'Take a heifer with you and say, "I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'"

"'Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate.'"

"Samuel did what the LORD said."

And when he got down into Bethlehem and got Jesse's family together, there was something of a pantomime that went on.

Jesse brought seven of his sons to meet with Samuel, and Samuel was impressed by them. Strong, sturdy, good looking – they are described that way.

Eliab was the eldest and Eliab was brought before Samuel, and Samuel saw Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD'S anointed stands here before the LORD."

This man, look at him, he would make a wonderful king. He's got the physique, has the charisma, has the intelligence. But God whispered to Samuel, "Not this one."

And then He explained to Samuel why, because Samuel was confused about this. And this is what God said in Verse 7,

"The LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'"

“Samuel, you are being impressed by the wrong things. He is impressive, he is strong, he is striking, he does a good resume, but Samuel, you have got to go under the surface and find his heart and find his disposition.”

Well the next one came before Samuel – Abinadab. He was impressive too and Samuel thought, “Well, maybe this one then.”

But God said, “No, once again you are impressed by the wrong things.

Then Shammah, the third brother came by.

“Not this one.”

And then Nathanel, the next boy, then Raddai, the next, then Ozem the next and Zeruiah the next; all 7 boys came one by one before Samuel. And for every one God said, “No, no, no, no, no, no, not this one.”

Samuel is now confused. And he asked Jesse a very awkward question. “Is there another son?”

I can imagine Jesse’s eyes falling to the ground. I imagine the brothers all glancing across at each other, wondering what they are thinking.

And Jesse probably coughed, cleared his throat. “Well, yes, there is another. We didn’t bring him. It probably won’t be worth your while. He is the youngest, teenager; he is out with the sheep.”

And Samuel said, “Run and fetch him.”

If we piece together what we know about David as a boy, he seems to have been very badly treated by his family. Here all of the sons had been invited and David deliberately left out. What an insult to him.

“You don’t count, David.”

Well if David was born long after the others and so they treated him like a little kid the whole time, we never, interestingly, hear any mention of his mother. Now I didn’t think of this until this moment. Perhaps his mother died in the course of the childbirth. He never mentioned his mother – they had reason to resent him.

You find that whenever the brothers are with him, they are always treating him in a bad way. In the next chapter, Chapter 17; you see, David, when his brothers were in the army and they were fighting, David would be sent back and forth, back and forth, it tells us, back and forth with all kinds of things that they needed.

And in Chapter 17 he had taken some bread and some cheese and some barley and he ran to the battle (the Philistines were in the Valley of Elah) with the supplies for his brothers.



And when he got there, he got into a conversation with a soldier and when Eliab, his older brother, heard him speaking with this other soldier, it says in Verse 28 of 1 Samuel 17,

“He burned with anger at him and asked, ‘Why have you come down here? And with whom did you leave those few sheep in the desert? I know how conceited you are and how wicked your heart is; you came down only to watch the battle.’”

See what David had to live with? His older brother burning with anger against him, accused him of irresponsibility, not leaving his sheep with somebody, though he actually had. He had intentionally and deliberately left a shepherd in charge when he went down to take this food to his brothers. But he accused him of being irresponsible. He told him he was conceited. He told him his heart was wicked. He told him he only wanted to see the blood and gore of the battle.

We have a word for this today. David was bullied and some of us here perhaps know what it is to be, what it does to us physically, what it does to us emotionally, what it does to us psychologically.

And David was bullied in the most intimate circle of his life where he should have been safest - by his own brothers and by the disregard of his own father.

David was brought in and I am sure those older brothers were seething with anger that he should even get an interview. He had him brought in.

It says in Verse 12,

“He was ruddy, with a fine appearance and handsome features.”

That was not unlike the other brothers.

“Then the LORD said, ‘Rise and anoint him; he is the man.’”

God sees not as man sees. God had told Samuel earlier,

“Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

“This bullied younger brother is the man,” said God.

What made David the man? Well there was nothing outward, for sure. There is nothing about him that wasn't true of his other brothers. It was not his pecking order in the family line for sure - at the bottom.

It was not his favoritism for sure, disregarded by his father and despised by his brothers.

It was his heart. As a young man he had developed a heart towards God. Maybe it was because the family treated him the way they did and he had nowhere else to go and he discovered he could go to God and he found in God nurture and life and strength.

You know the kind of young people we are, the way we react to the circumstances of our life, what becomes the epicenter of our lives, usually determines the kind of adult that we become.

Those of you who are young here this morning, get to know God while you are young. Give Him your whole life while you are young. Bring Him into the deepest area of your hearts while you are young. Bring everything under His lordship while you are young.

It gets harder as you grow older. “Remember your Creator,” wrote Solomon, “in the days of your youth.” That’s the time to remember Him and to get to know Him because, you know, we have a saying, “Boys will be boys” and we kind of say, “Boys will be boys”, which is true.

But boys will be men one day, and usually the kind of men they become depends on the kind of boys that they are. And the same applies, of course, to girls.

And that’s why we as parents must take that responsibility very seriously to nurture in our children kindness, to nurture in them honesty, to nurture in them a self-sacrificing spirit where they are not first and they learn to give and learn to share and learn to serve.

And demonstrate to your children your love for God just because it is your love for God. I don’t mean put something on for them. Let them see the intimacy of your heart before God. And actually some things are better caught than taught and our kids will catch the spirit of our homes.

Now this is David as a young man but he grows into a complex man. You know, if we just glance at David’s life very briefly this morning, at one stage he could write some beautiful things about his heart because he wrote in Psalm 17,

“Though you probe my heart and examine me at night, though you test me, you will find nothing; I have resolved that my mouth will not sin.”

I couldn’t take that prayer that is addressed to God and make it my own. “You probe my heart at night, God; You will find nothing.”

But David did. He had prayed in Psalm 19:14,

“May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart...”

(That is, the things I think about when I am alone.)

“...the meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight.”

At least David knew that anything else in his life would depend on what goes on in his heart. “What am I thinking about? What do I meditate on?”

Now meditate – don't make it a spiritual word; it's what you think about, what you dream about.

And yet things went wrong in David's life. He later had to pray on his knees through his tears in deep repentance,

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

He had to pray again,

“Create in me a clean heart.”

So he is pleading for a clean heart. He is pleading for a pure heart. And he is pleading for God to create this within him. Why? Because he has corrupted his heart.

David's downfall was women. He married multiple wives. He had been told not to. He delighted in the law of God and in the law of God in Deuteronomy Chapter 17, speaking of when they have a king over Israel, [Deut. 17:17]

“He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray.”

That was what Moses had written.

David took his first wife, Michal, the daughter of King Saul. And that was a sort of political arrangement.

And so then he took another one, maybe one that he fell in love with. Then he took another, then another, then another, then another, then another. He built up eight wives.

And when he had eight wives, he steals another man's wife, Bathsheba, when he saw her bathing on the roof of her house. And he called for her; he impregnated her; realized her husband who was away at battle would realize the baby was not his, so had him brought back from the battle for a few days' break in the hope he would sleep with his wife and when he found out she was pregnant, assume he was the father.

But Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, was a man of integrity. He said, “How can I go and enjoy my wife when my colleagues are out on the battlefield? No, I won't.”

And he slept on the doorstep of their house. So David tried to make him drunk to get him into the house to sleep with his wife but he refused.

When he went back to the battle, David said to his commander, Joab, “I want you to arrange for Uriah to get into the most dangerous place on the battlefield and get him killed. Joab, get him killed.”

And Joab did that. And David thought, “Phew! Now I am free. Everybody will think that this baby is Uriah’s.”

And then he began to take concubines. We don’t know how many. Concubines are women who form a harem for a king that he could go and pick out the ones he fancied.

And all this was in violation of the Law of Moses, which he loved (these are his words), which he meditated on, which was worth more than his daily bread, which was like honey to his lips. He said all those things in the Psalms about the law of God.

And yet he violates “You must not take many wives.” He violates, “Do not commit adultery.” He violates “Do not murder”. He violated, “Do not bear false witness.” He violates, “Do not covet your neighbor’s wife.”

You know turning from God is not usually sudden. It is usually incremental. It is not like a 180 degree turn that somebody is walking this way one day and suddenly, boom, they are going the other way and you say, “What ever happened to him?”

No, I tell you what happens, it is incremental. There are three degrees here, then five degrees there, then one degree here, then four degrees here, another degree here, and before long you find that your whole life is turned around because you tolerated the first three degrees, that you rationalize and say, “Well, it’s not that harmful.”

David, no doubt, was seduced by the culture around him. It was the culture of kings to have a harem of women. That was normal, so nobody challenged him. That was the culture.

Entitlement and privilege belonged to kings. That was the culture. He could take liberties that ordinary people couldn’t take.

And one of the biggest battles we have to face in our own lives is the culture that surrounds us. Don’t imbibe it but stand for truth against it, and David didn’t do this.

And when your heart and your mind become disconnected – you see, David said, “My heart belongs, you know, to God.” He was a man after God’s own heart. But he allowed his mind to play with some things.

And when your mind and your heart become disconnected, the mind gets seduced and the mind gets polluted, your heart joins in and you start to rationalize your way into your sin.

There are lots of consequences to these things. David’s family life was a mess. It was their life. It was a family in turmoil.

We know he had 19 sons by his wives and probably he had equal number of daughters in the law of averages. We have the names of 19 sons, plus numerous children by his concubines.

And his whole family life became a mess. Amongst his children there was incest and sexual violence and rape.

His son Absalom killed, murdered his son Amnon. Absalom, his son, then tried to kill David to get hold of the throne, but Absalom got killed in the process. Then his son Adonijah declared himself king in readiness for David's death.

And when Solomon, his son, eventually became king, he called in Adonijah and simply killed him.

This is a very messy story of David's life. His success had led to a sense of entitlement. Entitlement is when the normal rules don't apply because you think you are slightly, for some reason, above it.

Usually success breeds that within us. It's when we are successful we start fiddling the books you know. It's when we are successful we start being deceptive to maintain what we feel now are our privileges.

That success led to stress and that stress led to exhaustion and his heart crumbles under the pressure because once the undergirding of a heart that is right, and integrity of heart and honesty of heart, a truthfulness of heart; once that was undermined and chipped away at, the whole structure of his life began to crumble.

And sin led to a closing of his heart like plaque leads to a heart attack. David's sin building, building, building will one day break his heart.

You know success can be a poisonous drug. And David had to go for heart surgery more than once. You know before he fell into his sin, when he was a man after God's own heart, he could write such beautiful language about the heart.

For instance, in Psalm 24 he wrote this:

“Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place?

“He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.

“He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior.”

We love Psalm 24. We read that verse on our knees because we know it's true. “He who has clean hands and a pure heart...Oh God, give me those clean hands and pure heart because it is then that I know You.”

David prayed that. He knew about the clean hands and pure heart. But little by little there was this eroding of his heart towards God. As I said before, incrementally, little by little.

John Wesley's mother (John Wesley was the great 17<sup>th</sup> Century evangelist whose ministry led to a great revival); John Wesley's mother, Suzanna Wesley, was a godly woman. He often would quote her and refer to her.

And John Wesley writes that this is how she defined sin to him when he was a boy. She said, "Whatever weakens your reason, or impairs the tenderness of your conscience, or obscures your sense of God and takes away the relish of spiritual things, that for you is sin."

What weakens your reason and mine? What impairs the tenderness of our conscience? What obscures our sense of God? What takes away the relish of spiritual things? Because that is sin.

It may not seem at first to be sin. It may seem, well, you know, I'm a bit distant at the moment. That's your most dangerous time because you allow the inch to become a yard.

That's what David did. David, as most of those who know God, who want to live for God, let little sins begin to gain momentum.

I told you this story some years ago but I thought it was appropriate to mention it again, something I read in the newspaper many years ago now, of a circus act in Italy.

And there was an animal trainer who did his part of the show and he climaxed with a python that he had trained that would come into the ring. And the culmination of that would be to allow that python to wrap itself completely around him until all you could see was this column like a Michelin man with a python wrapped around.

Pythons never stop growing; the older it is, the longer it gets, and this was a long python. And he would stand in the ring completely encircled by the python and people sitting in the audience would feel it - I would anyway; I hate snakes.

And then he would give it the signal and it would unravel and go back across the floor of the ring and everybody would break out into applause.

And on this particular day (and I read the newspaper a day or two afterwards), as this python had wrapped itself around him, people were standing and sitting in silence just watching this.

Suddenly there was a piercing crack and then a scream and circus personnel realized what was happening and they ran into the ring. They killed the python but not before the python had crushed and killed the man.

Pythons are constrictors. And do you know, that man had got hold of that python when it was just newly born, just a few inches long, and he had trained that python by keeping it with him 24 hours a day in his pocket, sleep in his bed.

The python grew up thinking this was his mother - odd shaped, but this was his mother. And such was the familiarity that this python would go for him because it knew him and was safe with him.

But it was a python. One day it crushed him.

You know when that python was a little two or three inch long python, he could have crushed the head of that python between his fingers like that. But he didn't; it grew and grew and grew until one day it crushed him.

That is such a picture of sin. Unless it is blown into the open, that slippery slide will bring us to a breaking point.

The wonderful thing about the story of David holds the wonderful possibility for you and for me, that of true, genuine heart surgery when he cries in Psalm 51,

“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”

Notice he deals with the source there. “Create a clean heart deep inside me and a steadfast spirit - that's the outworking in grit, discipline, determination, a steadfast spirit – not a casual one in the hope it will go away – it won't. Determination.

And David began to ask God to keep his heart in check because in Psalm 139:23 he writes this, and I am sure this became his prayer:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts.

“See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

That is Psalm 139: 23, 24, a wonderful prayer to make our own. Search me; know my heart; test me. And if there is anything wrong, lead me in the way of righteousness.

Would you do that? Would I do that?

Edwin Orr is a well-known preacher a generation or more ago now; he used to write on revival. He was associated with this church, the Peoples Church, for several years, was a sort of minister at large I think they called him.

But Edwin Orr wrote a poem on the basis of that verse and that poem became a hymn but these were the words he wrote:

*Search me, O God, and know my heart today  
Try me, O Lord, and know my thoughts I pray  
See if there be some wicked way in me  
Cleanse me from every sin and set me free*

Will you make that your prayer?

Let's pray together.

Father, we don't ask it superficially; we want to ask it from the deepest place in our hearts, the deepest place in our lives, Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts. And if there is some offensive way in me, cleanse me. Cleanse me from every sin and put that steadfast spirit within me that keeps me away from that pit into which I have fallen.

Lord, I pray for everyone here in this building this morning. You know our hearts. We are open and laid bare before Him with whom we have to do. Your Word tells us that.

We have decided what people might know of us and some of us have built big walls of protection because outside of this building we are different people, alone; the occupation of our hearts, the meditation of our hearts is not towards Yourself. And I pray, Lord Jesus, You will give us the courage to be true until our hearts go through the surgery that cleanses and renews and empowers us.

We pray it in Jesus' Name, Amen.