

Psalm 101: How To Cultivate A Perfect Heart

Psalm 101:5-6

“A Believer After God’s Own Heart”

So what is it with King David, a “man after God’s own heart”(1 Samuel 13:14)? He resolves to carry out a godly way, but then we see from his life that his choices don’t always line up with his heart’s desire. What do we do with this? The same man who writes that he will set no wicked thing before his eyes (Psalm 101:3) shrinks back from his kingly duties in war time to lust after a naked Bathsheba and carry out nothing less than full-out adultery and deception and murder of her husband. Then we see in 2 Samuel 16-17 how David’s desire to only hire “the faithful of the land”(Psalm 101:6) gets turned on its head as Ahithophel, David’s favoured source of council (2 Samuel 16:23) turns on David. Beloved, maybe this is our tendency as followers of Jesus—we desire in our hearts to please God, but then we get constantly sidetracked by our flesh, the devil, or the world. Apostle Paul shares in our frustration over this tragic dichotomy:

Romans 7:15-25

I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God’s law; but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: In what ways can you relate to Paul concerning the lifelong battle between spirit and flesh raging within us? How do Paul’s words bring hope to your spirit, if they do?

*STUDY POINT: Find, write down, and memorize six Old or New Testament scriptures that could ensure you are battle-ready and victorious in your walk of righteousness with Christ.

In Today’s Teaching Room, we learn what were the redeeming qualities in David that earned him the title from God of “a man after God’s own heart.” And, how each of us can cultivate the very same kind of heart that God loves.

Open your Bible. Open your heart. Here we go!

Psalms 101:5

(KJV) Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

(NIV) Whoever slanders their neighbor in secret, I will put to silence; whoever has haughty eyes and a proud heart, I will not tolerate.

Psalms 101:6

(KJV) Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

(NIV) My eyes will be on the faithful in the land, that they may dwell with me; the one whose walk is blameless will minister to me.

If you were to present a resume to King David to apply to work for him, he would tear it up in front of you. Words on paper would mean nothing to him—your inside and outside character would mean everything to him. Note well, there were those in David's time and land who may at first glance seemed good candidates to join his team but were ultimately deceitful, unfaithful and unfit to attend to his office. This tragic dichotomy of character is commented on by Matthew Henry. He says,

V. His resolution to put those in trust under him that were honest and good (Psalm 101:6), My eyes shall be upon the faithful in the land. In choosing his servants and ministers of state he kept to the land of Israel and would not employ foreigners; none shall be preferred but true-born Israelites, and those such as were Israelites indeed, the faithful in the land; for even in that land there were those that were unfaithful. These faithful ones his eyes shall be upon, to discover them and find them out; for they were modest, did not crowd into the city to court preferment, but lived retired in the land, in the country, out of the way of it. Those are commonly most fit for places of honour and trust that are least fond of them; and therefore wise princes will spy out such in their recesses and privacies, and take them to dwell with them and act under them. He that walks in a perfect way, that makes conscience of what he says and does, shall serve me. The kingdom must be searched for honest men to make courtiers of; and, if any man is better than another, he must be preferred. This was a good resolution of David's; but either he did not keep to it or else his judgment was imposed upon when he made Ahithophel his right hand. It should be the care and endeavour of all masters of families, for their own sakes and their children's, to take such servants into their families as they have reason to hope fear God. The Son of David has his eyes upon the faithful in the land; his secret is with them, and they shall dwell with him. Saul chose servants for their goodness (1 Samuel 8:16), but David for their goodness.

That David resided in the covenantal lineage of God (2 Samuel 7) is important to remember as we may be tempted to question—given his private and public sin—if David really was a man after God's own heart. Indeed, we each as followers of Christ sometimes question our worthiness to called God's children (1 John 3:1-10). But such is God's grace through Jesus (John 1:14)!

David left us much evidence in Scripture that reveal his intimate relationship with God—his Matthew 6:6 prayer life, if you will. So let's come to David's defense as "a man after

God's own heart" by investigating five qualities God loved in David. Five qualities God loves to see in His children, that we may be believers after God's own heart.

1. God loves obedience. Acts 13:22 After removing Saul, he made David their king. God testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'
2. God loves faith and trust. 1Samuel 17:45 David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the LORD Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. 1Samuel 17:46 This day the LORD will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the Philistine army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. 1Samuel 17:47 All those gathered here will know that it is not by sword or spear that the LORD saves; for the battle is the LORD's, and he will give all of you into our hands."
3. God loves it when we think about Him by meditating on His Word. Psalm 119:47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Psalm 119:48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes. And remember, David wrote over half of the 150 Psalms in the Bible.
4. God loves a grateful heart. Psalm 100:4 Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. David never forgot to thank God, whether in times of prosperity or peril.
5. God loves a truly repentant heart. Psalm 51:1 Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Psalm 51:2 Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. Yes, David's sins of adultery, lying and murder were big. But he knew through experience that God's mercy was bigger.

All that God loves, all that David loved, we each and all—by the Holy Ghost and the Word of God and obedience to it—will also come to love. Like any relationship, our connection with God will deepen and grow with time if we are committed to it, as David was.

Take courage saints in this:

Philippians 1:6

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ

*QUESTION FOR MEDITATION: Rather than view the five character traits of someone who is after God's heart as a checklist, consider how then these qualities can be built into our daily lives. Consider 2 Peter 1:3-15 for supplemental reference.

*STUDY POINT: We see in John 4:23-24 that God is always looking for worshippers who will worship Him—in spirit (with all they are Luke 10:27) and truth (with all they know and obey according to His truth James 1:22)—seek out three passages of Scripture that could be pillars as to what a truly God-approved life looks like.

~ Reverend Darren McClelland