

THE PROFIT OF A TENDER HEART

Bible Reading: 2 Kings 22:1-20

In the last three months, we have learnt a lot about our spiritual food. If there is one thing that will help you keep the benefits of this knowledge and maintain a right relationship with God, it is a tender heart. Relationship with God begins in the heart. It is more than mental or physical; it is a spiritual thing (John 4:24). Our text describes the life of a king who had a tender heart and how that affected him and the people he ruled. His grandfather and father were evil; they ruled wickedly for almost 60 years. But Josiah was different. He did not follow the wrong examples before him. He trembled at the word of God and humbled himself. Josiah drove far-reaching reforms, which were never witnessed before his time (2 Kings 23:25). He reclaimed true worship the way God wanted it for His people. A tender heart will set you apart before God.

THE PROFIT OF A TENDER HEART

A tender heart is the basis of spiritual worship. It is soil for the word of God to bring forth fruit. It receives the word readily like a child (Mat 18:3; Acts 17:10-12), leading to continual growth (Luke 8:15). It makes the riches of God's grace to flourish, leading to several benefits. **One**, it secures forgiveness of sin (Luke 7:37,38,48; 22:61,62; Mark 16:7; John 21:15). **Two**, it aids saving faith (Acts 17:10-12; Jonah 3:4,5,10). **Three**, it brings quiet rest (Mat 11:28; Isa 32:17). **Four**, it attracts God's presence (Psalm 34:18; 51:17; Isa 66:1,2). **Five**, it brings personal revival (Isa 57:15). And **six**, it averts/delays divine judgment (1 Kgs 21:27-29; 2 Kgs 22:18-20).

THE PICTURE OF A TENDER HEART

A hardened heart rejects the word of God, views sin lightly and harbours it. It is proud or conceited, is ungrateful to God, stifles the convictions of conscience, shuns reproof and is presumptuous. This brings judgment (Zech 7:11-14; Jer 36:20-25). On the other hand, a tender heart searches God's word and obeys it. It is recognised by the following attributes: **One**, it is receptive: it listens to God, honours and trembles at His word (Isaiah 66:1,2, 5^a; Psalm 119:161; Acts 17:10,11). **Two**, it humbles itself towards God (1 Kgs 21:27; Isa 57:15). **Three**, it is sensitive to divine correction (1 Kgs 21:27-29; Heb 12:5-11). **Four**, it mourns over sin and turns from it; it intercedes for the sins of others (Exo 33:4-6; Ezra 10:6; Joel 2:12-13). **Five**, it obeys God from the heart (Luke 8:15; Rom 6:17; Eph 6:5-7). **Six**, it forgives offences in obedience to God's command to forgive one another (Eph 4:31,32; Col 3:12,13). And **seven**, it treasures a pure conscience (1 Sam 24:4-6; Acts 23:1-5; 24:16). It is not harsh, critical or judgmental of others, and is very careful in action, speech or comments about others, being mindful not to hurt or injure. It would rather bear wrong. When convicted by the Spirit or attended to a hurt by others, it sobers and apologises readily. If you are tender-hearted, you will be conscious that God's presence is anywhere you are. That will guide what you do or say.

THE PURSUIT OF A TENDER HEART

No matter the state of your heart now, it can become tender if you desire and believe God for it (Mark 9:23). **One**, fear God (2 Kgs 22:1,2,11). A tender heart is from God; yet the opening begins by man. The fear of God will make you watch what you think, say or do. **Two**, withdraw from mockers of God or His word (Psalm 1:1,2; Rom 16:17; 2 Thes 3:14). You cannot company with hardened people and be tender-hearted. **Three**, open your entire life to the searchlight of God's word (Acts 17:10-12; Neh 8:8,9). Never pull back when God's word confronts your lifestyle; rather, yield to Him in submission and prayer. **Four**, obey God habitually (2 Kgs 22:2). A habitually disobedient heart gets hardened; a habitually obedient heart gets tender. **Five**, pray the word of God into your life until your heart melts (Jer 23:29; Dan 9:1-3). Pray till your spirit agrees with what God's word says. **Six**, watch against a critical, evil, unbelieving spirit (Mat 7:3-5; Heb 3:12). If you get used to criticising others, your heart will soon harden in your own bubble or faults without you realising it. Remember the godly principle (Mat 7:12). And **seven**, examine yourself regularly to rid yourself of **"the little foxes that spoil the vine"** (2 Cor 13:5; Psalm 139:23,24; Song 1:6; 2:15). Generally, those who are always busy about others people's vineyards end up not keeping their own.

"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" – John 13:17