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SERMON TITLE A Tender Heart

SERIES

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KEY SCRIPTURE Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Kings 22

SYNOPSIS God loves a tender heart. How can we cultivate a tender heart?

HIGHLIGHTS



☞ A TENDER HEART

Last week we were in Psalm 51, talking about a Pure Heart. Sometimes we need a total makeover and only God can do that by his miracle-working power. We need to keep Running Back to God, Remember the Great Gift of Salvation we have received, and Continue Relying on God for Renewal.

☞ Hear what God says in **Ezekiel 36:26: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”**

You might have a stony heart. Elsewhere in scripture it is described as:

“Entertaining evil”	Matthew 9:4
“Calloused”	Matthew 13:15
“Far from God”	Matthew 15:8
“Stubborn”	Mark 3:5
“Hardened”	John 12:40
“Going astray”	Hebrews 3:10

A stony heart, just like a rock, is cold – it lacks the fire of God and the warmth of the Spirit. It is hard – it no longer receives God’s Word, and it resists the Holy Spirit. It is dead – it no longer even perceives the work of the Spirit, and is completely unmoved. But God can give you a heart of flesh. This kind of heart is alive and sensitive to the Spirit; it includes a tender conscience which avoids sin; it wants to do God’s will; it is filled with love and compassion.

Today I want to talk about a tender heart. Found in King Josiah, this is the kind of heart God loves.

During the time of the kings there was a lot of hard-heartedness toward God, often filled with immorality, idol worship, and rebellion. Manasseh ruled harshly over Judah for 55 years – a reign of evil and terror (2 Kings 21). During his reign Jerusalem was filled with blood from one end to the other. When Manasseh died, his son, Amon, became King and continued his father’s practices. In just two short years Amon was so despised that his own servants plotted to murder him. Amon’s death created a circumstance where his 8-year-old son became king. His name was Josiah. Josiah was very different from his father and grandfather.

☞ 2 Kings 22:2

He (Josiah) did what was right in the Lord’s sight and walked in all the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn to the right or the left.

Josiah was interested in seeking the Lord at 16 years of age. (2 Chronicles 34). In his 20’s he started purging the land of evil. He had people working to repair the temple, and while there, the high priest discovered the Book of The Law. Can you see just how corrupt the nation had become? God’s Word was discarded and hidden – a lost relic! Those previous leaders had yielded to hardened, stony hearts. That’s what happens when we neglect God’s Word – eventually, we don’t even consider it anymore.

☞ **Neglect of God’s Word leads to a cold, hard, stony heart.**

But, when the book was read in the presence of the king, it sparked an immediate response. Josiah tore his clothes and sent a message to a prophetess named Huldah who lived in Jerusalem. Huldah



informed him. But that their land was on the brink of disaster because of idolatry. But, she also sent a message of grace to the king:

2 Kings 22:19-20 NKJV

19 because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the Lord. 20 Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.

Josiah made a commitment to keep the commands of the Lord with "all his heart and with all his soul." The people agreed to follow his lead. So, he went about demolishing all indications of idolatry and he observed the Lord's Passover for the first time in many years. 2 Kings 23:25 sums him up... "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did — with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses." So, Josiah is a great example of a tender heart. What are the characteristics of a tender heart?

☞ **A Tender Heart Welcomes the Word of God**

Josiah welcomed the Book of the Law when he heard it. Judah had neglected God's Word so completely that it was buried under the rubble in an abandoned temple. But Josiah opened up his heart to hear and receive what was read in his presence. He inquired of a prophetess to explain and give him the information he needed to follow God's path.

Other leaders who encountered God turned away. In Exodus 5:2, Pharaoh said, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him by letting Israel go? I don't know the Lord..." How many in our world respond to God's Word in that way? "Why should I obey?" What about in the church? What about us?

☞ If we are to keep a tender heart toward God we must **not only read or hear the Word, but receive and welcome the Word with obedience**. James 1:21 says, "get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you." A tender heart welcomes the Word.

☞ **A Tender Repents of Wrongdoing**

Josiah tore his clothes and cried out to God – not a very noble action for a King. At that moment he recognized two things: He recognized his status before the King of the Universe. And, he recognized his sin before a Righteous God. He humbled himself.

Humility requires us to see those same two things. Humility says, "God is greater," and, "I am dependent." We like to be independent, overlooking our sin. But, only when we recognize our need and the reality of our sinfulness can we know the power of humility and come to repentance.

☞ **God doesn't just want us to feel remorse. He wants us to repent and change.**

2 Corinthians 7:10-11 says, "Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret." It goes on to describe an attitude of earnestness, alarm and concern over the sorrow, wanting to make things right.

Psalms 51:17



The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

The prodigal can always come home, but the tender heart brings him home now. Is that any of us today? A tender heart repents of wrongdoing.

☞ **A Tender Heart Consults the King**

When Josiah heard the Word, he welcomed it and immediately repented. Then, he reached out to the Lord to find out what to do next. He welcomed the Word; he repented of wrongdoing; but, now what? So, he consulted the King of kings. And God responded.

God spoke through Huldah to let Josiah know, "I myself have heard." God hears - and that is one of the most amazing truths in Bible! God hears us when we pray. When prayer time with God slacks we ☞ can become oblivious to our sins, much like the nation before Josiah's time. But, **when we reach out to the Lord with a tender, repentant heart, he hears us. And, it stirs his mercy.**

Because of Josiah's response, God kept him from enduring the coming assault of Assyria and ultimate destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar. That is God's mercy in response to a tender heart. A tender heart consults the King, and He hears and responds with mercy.

Josiah is teaching us to keep a tender heart toward God. Charles Finney commented about the tender heart. He said that *a tender heart is easily excited about subjects of a religious nature, especially regarding the Kingdom of Christ. A tender heart is easily convinced of error and is quickly ready to retract it. A tender heart will manifest a deep sorrow for sin; it welcomes reproof, and is prompt to repent. A tender heart is highly appreciative of God's love and compassion, never wanting to grieve the Lord. A tender heart is inclined to show grace toward others without hasty judgment. A tender heart will pray eagerly for the salvation of souls.*

☞ I want to have a tender heart that is ready to respond to God immediately. A heart that **Welcomes the Word; that Repents of Wrongdoing; that Consults the King.** Proverbs 4:23 says, "Guard your heart above all else, for it is the source of life."

There are so many things in our world which work to harden our hearts toward God. We must do all we can to avoid having a hard heart. Josiah's tender heart toward God sparked a revival in his Kingdom. What would happen if we had a tender heart toward God?

- In our Families - leading those we love back to God
- In our Church - greater commitment, unity and witness
- In our Community - shining the light of the gospel

☞ **(click now to start music)** Have you neglected God's Word? Has your heart grown calloused and hard? Is there sin to repent of? Run to God! Consult the King! Get back on track! Get a tender heart!

God, we pray for awakening today!