

**THE GUIDELINE***Psalms 31:3***THE BIBLE HEART**

**R**ecently, I went to my cardiologist for a check-up. During the visit, I went through several tests to see if my heart was in good condition. Thankfully, my check-up revealed I had a very healthy heart.

The word of God has quite a bit to say about the heart, but almost without fail, it is not referring to the actual blood pump in our chest, but it is referencing our inner man, or to put it another way, the inner thoughts of man or our conscience. There are a handful of scriptures that speak of the actual organ that pumps blood through the body. One of the clearest is in 2 Kings 9:24, *“And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.”*

The word heart is also used in the scripture to represent the center of things. In Deuteronomy, we read, *“And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.”* (Deuteronomy 4:11) The word translated “midst” is from the Hebrew word (לֵב לֵב) heart. In the New Testament, the Greek word translated heart also means the center of things. One lexicon says, heart (internal feature) n. — the locus of a person’s thoughts (mind), volition, emotions, and knowledge of right from wrong (conscience) understood as the heart.

The word heart is used over nine hundred times in the Bible, so one might think God intended us to understand what it is. It is not my purpose to study all the nuances of how the word heart is used. Instead, I will refer to basically one.

As we have seen, it is the case that the Bible uses the word heart figuratively to represent the center of man’s thoughts. Out of all of the passages dealing with the heart, one of the most disturbing verses is found in Jeremiah 17:9 *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it.”* Just why mankind is attracted to evil and sin has weighed heavy on men’s minds for a long time. Someone might come along and say, “Well, I know why mankind is so attracted to evil. It is because man is born with a sinful nature.” If there is one thing we can certainly know to be false, it is the teaching that we are born with a wicked nature. It cannot be proven from the scriptures, but what can be is that we become that way from our wicked associations and the habitual practice of such, *“Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners.”* (1 Corinthians 15:33) ( see also: Gen. 6:5, 8:21, Ephesians 2:3) According to Jeremiah, we can be in danger of self-deception when we rely on our hearts (mental faculties). Paul had a few things to say about this, *“Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise.”* (1 Corinthians 3:18) Here, it is obvious we sometimes deceive ourselves into thinking the world has all the answers and we don’t need any help from God and His word, but Paul immediately thwarts that thought in the next line, ...the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Again, in Galatians 6:3, Paul, having dealt with a brother overtaken in a fault/sin said to the one trying to help the poor soul to be careful not to think too highly of himself, *“For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.”*

This, of course, is remedied by seeking out God’s instruction and following him. *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”* (2 Timothy 3:16–17) The wise Solomon said, *“Keep (guard) thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life.”* (Proverbs 4:23) After this brief look at the Biblical concept of the heart, we might ask ourselves, “What is the central focus of our lives?†

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