

Introduction:

- 1) **PROBLEM:** We have a tendency to hide what our hearts are really like even from ourselves.
 - a) This is all part of one parable
 - i) Blind are blind to their blindness
 - ii) Planckeyes are blind to their planks
 - iii) Fools are blind to their foundations
 - b) The fact that Jesus is using numerous examples in this one parable is indicative that He believes this issue to be a huge problem for humanity
 - i) We market ourselves fraudulently - managing our own brands in order to get people to sense our value and invest in us.
 - ii) We spin and airbrush ourselves because we do not want people to see the real us, the heart's raw nature. We fear exposure all the time, so we pretend to be and feel and think what we do not actually.
 - c) The basic idea is that the human heart, in its sinfulness, is always trying to distract itself from its brokenness and point to other brokenness as needing fixed. This is hypocrisy.

- 2) **PRETENSE:** We fear exposure, so we expose others in order to shine the light elsewhere lest others see what we know in the darkness.
 - a) Hypocrisy = same word for "actor" or "stage player" in Greek
 - i) Actors would wear literal masks in the Greek theatre
 - (a) Joy mask, Grief mask, Anger mask
 - ii) All good acting hides the actors true feelings for the purpose of the appearances necessary for the story
 - (a) Thus, actors appear happy when their hearts may be sad and they may appear sad when their hearts are happy
 - iii) This idea of hypocrisy is that the part revealed is not the same as the heart concealed.
 - (a) There is a disconnect between the heart and the appearances on the outside. To play a part.
 - iv) This is fine for the stage, but is devastating in reality.
 - b) It's purpose, however, is to divert attention away from ourselves.
 - (1) Note that Jesus says, "why do you 'see' the speck...do not 'see' the beam"
 - (2) Hypocrisy is deeply connected to where you are looking.
 - (3) This "inability to see" shows us that Jesus is not speaking merely of the deliberate fraud of a pretender, but rather of deep, innate, natural, and UNSEEN hypocrisy of self-righteousness within the human heart
 - (i) It's not just pulling the wool over someone else's eyes, but it runs so deep that you've pulled the wool over your own eyes!
 - c) There's a greater disconnect between the inner and outer, the heart and the actions, the player and the mask, when you have deceived yourself, not realizing that you are the actor.
 - (1) It's like a method actor getting lost in his own role and forgetting his true self.
 - d) Jesus is saying that this hypocrisy is really failing to see our own beam
 - i) you know that its huge (it's the load-bearing beam of a house!)
 - (a) Is Jesus being sarcastic using such a huge hyperbole?
 - (b) The purpose of the exaggeration is that all of know that there is a huge problem within our hearts, not merely flawed, but enormously wrong, and we know it even if we cannot see it
 - ii) covering up what we do not really know, but that we know is wrong
 - (a) Naked and unashamed because they didn't care what anyone or anything saw, but the minute they sinned, they knew something was wrong and they wanted to hide. Why hide?
 1. They knew it, but didn't know it. They were hiding the beam in their eye while seeing each other's speck!
 - (b) Suppressing the truth in unrighteousness
 1. Both the religious and the irreligious is the same desire to cover the beams in our own eyes either through religious success (and frequently pointing out others' "nakedness") or defending the wrong as right (nothing is wrong, whatever one wants for oneself is fine). They are all fig leaves.

- 3) **HEART:** Jesus calls us to go deeper than merely evaluating our actions to evaluating the root of those actions: the heart
 - a) Because your fruit reveals your *heart*
 - i) Winston Smith example of the water in the cup:
 - b) The heart is the "seat of the affections" – what you desire.
 - i) We speak and act based upon what we desire and what we expect to satisfy those desires.

- ii) Thus, our actions simply reveal what is in our heart
- 4) TRUE ASSESSMENT: What does the fruit of my mouth say about my heart?
- a) We can respond to our moral failures (bad fruit) in three ways:
 - i) Ignore it by denying its severity
 - (1) “Grace covers everything” so we never actually deal with our sinful heart’s desires, refusing to see that they are rooted in a dishonoring of Christ. Often we will blame others, blame our circumstances, but never blame our own hearts. It is easier to say that our behavior was bad than that our hearts are bad. This is cheap grace, whereby we lose sight of the value of grace and simply view sin as acceptable or justifiable and God’s grace is merely for the past or the future.
 - ii) Start at it morbidly
 - (1) We become myopic about our weakness and sin until all that we can see is our failure. We let them define us. “God must be furious with me and want me near to him because I’m such a weak failure.” This is legalism (failed legalism, but legalism the same). We become racked with anxiety and fear. Our thoughts and time are taken up with this bad fruit, we are consumed by thoughts and schemes on how to defeat it or avoid situations in which it has arisen. We become fraught with despair. This is not true repentance, it is penance, paying for our sin by fighting. We believe that God’s grace is only for the future so now we just have to “hold on”.
 - iii) Repent in Christ by confessing sin’s presence in my heart
 - (1) We can admit that “I have sinned” and yet not let it define us because we are in Christ by faith. In this manner, we say that “I am an accepted and beloved child of God in Christ, and I have sinned in this way.” Jesus is my sin-bearer and my righteousness. I am complete in Him. It is a form of sorrow for belittling Christ with our unbelief, both in the heart and the actions of sin, but it is not despair. Rather, going to our Advocate and resting in His blood which pleads for every failure, we joyfully boast in His Him and His glorious grace. We call sin what it is...sin.. and then evaluate the “why” we responded to stress or pressure sinfully. Then we take the “why” we did it (our heart’s idolatry of something!) to Christ and apply the gospel to our hearts in order to see our responses changed from the inside out. It is the process of grateful worship to the One who bears up our failures and presents us before God holy and blameless.
 - b) Until we recognize that our beams are heart issues, not merely behavior issues, and see the absolute hugeness of it and my own inability to remove it or even see it, and that I need to be rescued by a Surgeon who can see, I will not be able to speak words of life to another.
- 5) SOLUTION: What do I do if I find that my heart is not where it ought to be?
- a) Recognize the “why” you sinned?
 - i) Galatians 5 – “Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the *desires* of the Flesh”
 - (1) This word, “desires”, is not merely a word for wants, but a compound word: “over + desire”
 - (2) The Flesh “over-desires” and thus leads us to respond sinfully because we have placed something in our hearts as having greater importance than it is supposed to have.
 - ii) Thus, sexual desire, a good thing, become a sinful thing when it becomes an ultimate thing, when our over-desire for it makes it an end in itself rather than the means to deep biblical God-honoring and wife-honoring love.
 - (1) When we “over-desire” sex in this way, it leads to behaviors that are sinful.
 - (2) However, if we only respond to the behaviors of sexual sin (avoiding certain areas, accountability efforts, negative reinforcement, images of killing kittens, etc.) we do not see actual growth or transformation of our hearts
 - (3) We will continue, in this manner, to struggle with strong over-desire for sex even while possibly restraining the external behaviors
 - (a) Frankly, I thought marriage would fix my heart’s over-desire because it would put the behavior in a proper context, but it doesn’t. The issue is the over-desire of the heart, not the circumstance.
 - b) Remain in the Vine
 - i) Drink in the life-giving sap of Christ!
 - ii) Galatians 5 – “if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law”
 - (1) Look at this! Paul is relating “not carrying out the desires of the flesh” to “not under law”
 - (2) This is revealing as to how the human heart works. We are always under some law, some promise that we believe will get us what we want.
 - (a) If we work hard, we get respect. Thus, a law attached to a promise. “If I do X, I receive the blessing of Y” or “If I don’t do X, I receive the curse of Z.”
 - (b) Example: “If I do the dishes, I will get honor and appreciation from my wife.” What is my desire? Respect. Appreciation. Honor. And I have placed myself under them. The dishes, then, become the law which promises the blessing of respect.
 - (i) How do I know if my desire for respect and honor is an over-desire? What “spills out” when my wife doesn’t show me appreciation? Words of bitterness? Complaining? Gossip to a friend?

- (ii) When we don't receive what our law, of which we placed ourselves under, promised we respond sinfully with bitterness, irritability, anger, fear, anxiety, despair, etc.
 - (iii) Our response indicate that my heart has been over-desiring respect!
- c) Remind your heart of the gospel of grace.
- i) We don't see our own hearts rightly, but Jesus does. And we will never be able to see rightly until we admit that not only can we not see rightly, but we cannot judge rightly, either. We must entrust ourselves to the only One who can see
 - (1) Jesus looked into our hearts and saw what was there (John 2:23-25) and thus "he did not trust anyone." This is directly before His teaching to Nicodemus on the necessity of being born again, brought from dead to life by the external power and intention of the Holy Spirit of God. "You must be made new to even see the Kingdom of God!"
 - ii) Jesus saw clearly, He saw right into us and what did He do about it?
 - (1) He was nailed to our beam!
 - (2) He was nailed to our tree
 - (3) He who bore only good fruit, bore the worthless fruit and all its rottenness and stink
 - iii) He did all this so that you would be made new, see rightly, humbly repent of your own strength and rely upon His. Our over-desires and their subsequent sinful responses reveal that we are not worthy of God's affections, YET HE HAS SET HIS AFFECTIONS ON YOU IN CHRIST FOR YOUR GOOD!!
 - (1) Do you desire respect? Have you not received honor in Christ?
 - (2) Do you desire comfort? Have you not been comforted and are "safe and secure from all alarms"?
 - (3) When our desires are actively met in the life-giving sap of Christ, we respond to unappreciation or dishonor by asking instead, "How can I love this person right now?" rather than worrying about our own glory, respect, honor.
 - iv) Remind your heart that you are not condemned by its failures, for Christ died for you and lives for you today. You are a new creation already, yet still being transformed.
 - (1) 1 John 3:19-21
 - (2) Gal 2:19-21; 6:15-16
 - (3) Romans 5:8-9; 8:1-2
 - (4) Col 3:9-10
 - (5) 2 Cor 5:17

Conclusion: TRANSFORMATION: This is the point of the builder and the foundations. What are you going to build the foundation of your life upon? What is it that establishes you, gives your security and certainty? Under what law will you place yourself? The law of Christ or something else. Jesus ends his teaching with a question in word picture:

- Will you build upon the works and words of Jesus, knowing the fragility of your own heart, your own blindness?
- Or, will you continue digging your foundations in the sand, trusting your self-deceived heart or the blind heart of other people?