

PAUL'S THEOLOGY

Lesson 38

Paul's Anthropological Terms Overview and "Heart"

The summer I graduated from high school, the radio frequently pounded out a new hit song by The Who. The persistent chorus was catchy:

Well, who are you? (Who are you? Who? Who? Who? Who?)
I really want to know! (Who are you? Who? Who? Who? Who?)
Tell me, who are you? (Who are you? Who? Who? Who? Who?)
Cause I really wanna know! (Who are you? Who? Who? Who?
Who?)

I am not sure what The Who meant in their lyric, but the question itself is one that philosophers have wrestled with for millennia. The question is important. As we ask who we are, we are also asking what we are. This also is relevant to the question of what happens to us when we die.

The question can be asked on many levels. On a basic level, "Who are you?" can seek your identity or identification. In this sense, I am "Mark Lanier" with a certain address, social security number, *etc.*

The question can also challenge your actions or what you are doing. I saw this in a movie recently when an exasperated spouse asked a bizarrely acting husband, "Who are you anyway?"

The question can be philosophical, asking what the essence of a person is. In this sense, I might wonder, "What makes Mark Lanier, Mark Lanier?" The philosophical question has a number of different aspects that leave us with very direct and sharp questions about existence and action. Consider:

- Am I my physical body? If so, then should I ever lose a limb, would I be any less Mark Lanier? Assuming I would still be Mark Lanier, albeit maybe with an amputated arm, does that mean that it is not my body that makes Mark Lanier?
- Am I my brain activity, as opposed to my physical limbs? If I am my brain activity, then what happens should my brain cease to work (I mean "brain dead" in medical terms, not insult terms!)? Would that mean that one could/should properly pull the plug if I were ever in that state in the hospital?

- Am I simply a DNA chain replicating itself over and over? Then once the DNA stops replicating, and once the existing DNA degrades and dissolves into lesser substances, do “I” no longer exist? If this is true, does that mean that a clone of myself is still me? Would using my same DNA chain in a second body mean I exist in two places at two times?
- Am I that part of me that consciously exists? Is that why I know that the cloning of me would not still be the same “me?” Does this mean I am the collection of memories that circulate in my body and brain? Does the amnesia victim become less of who they “were” and someone quite different? What of the Alzheimer’s patient? Or what about the person with split consciousness? Does a human being with two entirely different personalities and existences count as two people in one body or simply one? If one, which one?
- Am I some combination of the many options above? Brain waves and memories? Body and DNA working in conscious ways?
- If we want to get deeper into the philosophical intricacies of personal identity, we might ask who or what *defines* who we are. In other words, am I what *I perceive* me to be, or am I what others perceive me to be? As a Christian, I would be more specific, am I what I perceive me to be or am I what God perceives me to be? Is there a difference?¹
- If I accept that I am a “person,” then we ask the questions of “persons.” What makes a “person?” When does one become a “person?” Does a “person” start once an egg and sperm unite? Does one need consciousness to be a person? Does that make a chimpanzee a person? Does one need consciousness with a certain DNA structure to be a person?
- If we consider life after death, and the assurance of our faith that God resurrects all “persons,” what exactly is resurrected? What level of “consciousness?” What kind of “body?” What does God have to do for “you” or “I” to be resurrected?
- If we think of ourselves as more than physical, what are the limits of the spiritual? In other words, does the “spirit” exist outside of the “physical?” Is our “spirit” limited in space and time to our body’s physical presence?

¹ In 1955 Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham developed a psychological tool for better self-understanding and better relational communication. The tool is the “Johari Window.” The window is four-paned, and each pane or box represents rooms or areas of self-knowledge and areas of knowledge others have of you. One point of the model is that there are things others know about us that we are unable to know or discern ourselves. In our approach, we ask whether there are aspects to us that define who we are that God knows, that we do not.

Can we “spiritually perceive” or venture forth beyond the physical realms of our bodies?

Sorting through these questions, we may keep the echoing chorus of The Who going in our heads, but we turn our thoughts to Paul’s writings to get insight into the question, “Who are you?”

We do this with some warning that Paul does not directly address all our questions. Still, he does address concepts that provide great insight into many of these questions. Paul speaks of venturing forth, perhaps in the spirit (“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows” 2 Cor. 12:2). He writes of God resurrecting the body (“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?...God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body” 1 Cor. 15:35,38). There is much more to what Paul has to say, and that is the study we are commencing.

TERMS TO COVER

When Paul wrote about aspects of humanity, he used a number of different Greek terms. Paul wrote of the “heart” (*kardia*), the “body” (*soma*), the “flesh” (*sarx*), the “soul” (*psuche*), the “mind” (*nous*), the “spirit” (*pneuma*), the “conscience” (*suneidesis*), and even nuances to the word for “man” (*esolezo anthropos* “inner” and “outer” man).

These terms are fun to study. There are several ways to pursue understanding them based upon one’s resources and background knowledge. One option is to take a concordance, look up one word at a time and then seek to understand the word based on the passages where the word is used. One might do the same thing with a Greek concordance which then gives each Greek usage and helps alleviate possible misses from an English concordance based off a translation rather than the Greek.

Another way to study the terms is to find a selection of good books from authors who have considered and written on the terms.² Books by David Stacey and Robert Jewett, for example, dedicate a full chapter to each term.

² Such books could include W. David Stacey, *The Pauline View of Man* (Macmillan 1956); R. Jewett, *Paul’s Anthropological Terms* (E. J. Brill 1971); D. E. H. Whiteley, *The Theology of St. Paul* (Fortress Press 1966) at 31-44; H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Christian Doctrine of Man* (T&T Clark 1958); C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (Epworth Press 1951); R. Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (London 1956), Vol. 1 at 191-246.

A third way to study the terms is to tune in to the next few classes in here! Our goal is to gain insight into how Paul uses these terms. Through that insight, we hope to better understand the word of God as delivered by brother Paul. We also hope to more fully understand our own nature, who we are, how God made us, and what the future holds for us.

Our first reaction might be to assume that Paul wrote each term with a fixed meaning. We should not too quickly make that assumption, however. For even in English, we do not write or speak that way. For example, when we speak of “body,” we can mean an individual’s physical shape (as in, “I need to quit eating these cookies; they are not good for my **body!**”). We can also use “body” to mean the whole person, as distinct from simply the physical body (as in, “I want every**body** to pay attention please!”)

As we work through these terms, we will see that the words also did double and triple duty for Paul. To best understand his theology on these ideas as parts or extensions of man, we will need to sort through his various usages. As we do so, we see that sometimes the words take on theological significance, while other times they seem very mundane in their meaning.

We have more fun in store on understanding the terminology as we try to trace the roots that Paul likely had in mind as he wrote. As we noted in the ethics lessons of late, Paul always sought to behave (which certainly included how he wrote and preached) in ways that targeted Jews at times while at other times in ways targeting Greeks. (1 Cor. 9:20*ff*; see also Acts 17:22 and Paul’s address to the Greeks in Athens). This interplays with Paul’s words related to humans as we consider whether Paul is writing with the Hebrew concept of humanity or the Greek. The typical parts of Hebraic anthropology were “heart,” “spirit,” “soul,” and “body.” In this sense, we read Luke’s writings of Christ’s injunction:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind. (Lk 10:27).

As we consider Paul’s audience, however, we should also consider the Greek concepts of an “inner” and “outer” man, of man as “mind,” “body,” and “conscience.”³

Stacey approaches this problem asking whether Paul’s views were influenced primarily by his Hebrew training and education or by his Greek exposure. Stacey concludes that Paul moved freely between the two worlds, but that Paul’s views were really shaped by God and the Damascus road experience. Ultimately, Paul

³ Jewett at 3.

wrote as one who had experienced God in ways that surpassed his training in either Judaistic or Hellenistic thought.⁴

Similar issues abound over whether Paul divides man into two (“inner” and “outer” or “body” and “soul/spirit”) or whether Paul writes of the “soul” and “spirit” separate and divides man into three parts. The Corinthian letters are argued by some to indicate Paul wrote of man as two parts (“And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit” 1 Cor. 7:34; “let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God” 2 Cor. 7:1). Others point to First Thessalonians to indicate that Paul wrote of man in three parts (“Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” 1 Thess. 5:23).

These issues will be part of our study, but they are not where we start! We start with the simple term for “heart.” From there we will move through the other terms in later lessons.

HEART

We begin with the heart. This is a term we know from the earliest age. Before we launch into Paul’s use of the word, let us consider its usages today. Of course we know the heart as the central blood-pumping organ of the body. In this sense, most every animal has a heart. We know that people can actually have the heart of another after a transplant operation.

But our modern usage of heart is not simply in reference to the organ beating in one’s chest. Valentine’s Day brings a whole different shine to the heart. It is a celebration of love and affection. The heart stands for the place of emotional caring as well as the decisional aspects of love. It is also an endearing term. Many times I speak of my **sweetheart** Becky.

Avid watchers of sports find another aspect to the heart. The athlete with a lot of heart is one who will fight on. It is the boxer who gets knocked down and regains his feet. The basketball player in fatigue who manages to find the strength for the last part of the game has heart. When we see someone give up before the game concludes, we speak of them “losing heart.”

⁴ Stacey at 55: “Pauline Christianity does not appear to be either Hellenism or Judaism or a mixture of the two. Some other dominant influence is clearly at work. May it not be that this influence was revelation? It may well be that the driving power of Paul’s faith was an understanding of God that was hidden from the Greeks, and not revealed to the prophets or the Rabbis but was revealed to Paul.”

If you're into rock trivia, Heart is Ann and Nancy Wilson's band.

We use heart sometimes to refer to the place of deep thoughts and desires. Have you ever wanted something "with all your heart?"

The heart can reference the seat of perception or understanding. There are more than a few Hebrew verb conjugations I had to learn by heart!

The heart is often used as the center of something. There are artichoke hearts. In Houston, the heat is particularly bad in the heart of summer. When our children hurt themselves, we frequently have pulled them to our hearts to hold them.

Of course there are two shapes that combine to make a "heart." This is obvious to any card player who knows a heart when he sees one!

This could go on and on (heart worms, heart burn, heart broken, hearty, *etc.*), but the point is hopefully made that we use the word "heart" in a variety of ways. Paul was no different!

The English word "heart" has come down through language from the Germanic roots of our language (Old High German had *herza*; the Old Norse was *hjarta*). The Greek word Paul used was *kardia* (καρδία). We see vestiges of the Greek word in our medical language. Ask a cardiologist (heart doctor)!

Scholars work hard to determine where Paul drew his meaning for the word heart as he used it. There are multiple possibilities considered. Paul might have used it in the sense that the Greek philosophers used it. Paul might have used it in the sense that the translators of the Hebrew Old Testament had when they put the Scriptures into Greek (the "Septuagint"). Paul might have used the word in the sense that the Rabbis in his day used it. All of these are possible, and a review shows certain similarities across the board. Still, most scholars deduce that Paul seems to carve out his own usage of the word "heart" in ways consistent with the Old Testament, yet that set it apart from Greek philosophy as well as the Rabbis. Even the Old Testament usage is not fully reflected in Paul's Greek.⁵

Paul uses the word heart in a number of ways, not at all unlike many of the English usages we have given earlier:

1. Paul writes of **the heart as an organ** in one sense in 2 Corinthians 3:3 where the English Standard Version gives us:

⁵ See Stacey at 194ff; G. Kittel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Eerdmans 1965), vol. 3 at 605ff.; Jewett at 305ff.

And you show that you are a letter from Christ delivered by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

The words translated “human hearts” are more directly translated “fleshly hearts” (καρδιας σαρκιναις). Paul is referencing the human heart itself.

2. Paul writes of **the heart as the seat of the emotions** in a number of places. As we look at these passages, we see Paul seeing the heart as desiring both good and bad. We see the good desires in passages like Romans 10:1 where Paul writes of his “heart’s desire” that the Jews be saved. Yet in Romans 1:24, Paul discusses those who abandoned the revelation of God as ones whom God gave up to impurity “in the lusts of their hearts.” The heart, at least in these passages seems either morally neutral or capable of either end of the moral spectrum. Paul has the heart as the place of sorrow in 2 Corinthians 2:4 where Paul explained that he wrote:

[O]ut of much affliction and anguish of heart and with many tears.

Paul’s affection for the Philippians was something he held in his “heart” (Phil. 1:7). The rejection of Christ by the Jews was something that Paul said gave him, “great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart” (Rom. 9:2). Paul writes of the love in his heart to the Corinthians in multiple places:

We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections (2 Cor. 6:11-12).

I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts (2 Cor. 7:3).

So in this sense, we see Paul writing of the heart as a place for the feelings, emotions, desires and passions of man.⁶

3. Paul writes of **the heart as a place of mental processing**. In Romans 1:21, when Paul writes of those who “knew God” but “did not honor him as God or give thanks to him,” he says “their foolish hearts were darkened” as he explained they became “futile in their thinking.” But, we should pause for a moment and consider the nature in which Paul uses “heart” for intellectual activity. A major difference in the Old Testament word translated heart (לֵב - lav) and Paul’s Greek is that Paul will typically insert the word “mind” for instances of intellectual thinking as opposed to “heart” for moral and spiritual processing.

⁶ Kittel at 612.

When we read passages that indicate Paul speaks of the heart in this sense, we need to understand them as meaning the moral and spiritual processing more than the intellectual knowing. This is seen in passages like Ephesians 1:18 where Paul prays that the Ephesians might have:

the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.

Paul is setting out more than a prayer of intellectual knowledge about Jesus, the promised resurrection and the believer's inheritance. Paul wants the Ephesians to have the moral and spiritual enlightenment so they can process and understand, beyond simple intellectualizing, the power and resources of the believer.

4. In a related sense, Paul has **the heart as the seat of ethical judgment**. Again this is part of the import of Romans 1:21. The darkened hearts belong to those whose life choices have rejected and dulled the judgment of what is good. This same idea is set out in the next chapter where Paul writes of the Gentiles who "show that the work of the law is written on their hearts" (Rom. 2:15).

5. Paul uses **the heart as a place of volition and will**. In 1 Corinthians 4:5, Paul writes of the time when God will "bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart." Then several chapters later (in 7:36-37), Paul writes of the betrothed but unmarried as one who needs to marry because his passions are uncontrollable. Paul compares him to one who:

is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart.

We see this also in 2 Corinthians 9:7 where the ESV translates the passage, "Each one must give as he has made up his mind." The word translated "mind" is actually "heart" (*kardia*). That Paul is referencing the heart is a bit clearer as we finish the verse, "Each one must give as he has made up in his mind (heart), not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Here, the heart is the place of volition, will, or the source of resolves, but it is part and parcel with an emotional aspect to the exercise of will.

6. Paul writes of **the heart as a reference to one's acceptance or rejection of God**. In this sense Robinson and Stacey see the heart as referring "to the whole personality."⁷ The passages come from a number of places in Paul's writings. Consider these passages:

⁷ Stacey at 195.

- “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your *heart* that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the *heart* one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Rom. 10:9-10).
- “For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their *hearts*. But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed.” (2 Cor. 3:15-16).

7. Paul used **heart as an inward place of life** as opposed to matters that are outward. Consider in this sense Romans 2:28-29:

For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision **is a matter of the heart**, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Similarly, in 1 Thessalonians 2:17, Paul writes that outwardly he was torn from the church in Thessalonica, yet inwardly he stayed with them (“We were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person, not in heart”). Paul draws the same distinction between outward and inward in 2 Corinthians 5:12 where he writes of “those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart.”

CONCLUSION

Where does this leave us as we study our first of Paul’s terms, “heart?” Paul is not writing out of some naïve medical misunderstanding of an organ in the body that Paul mistakenly believed was the center of feeling. Paul is using an expression that has already outgrown the simple meaning of a body part. Paul is speaking of something within a person that is the “intending, purposing self—which decides within itself or is moved from without — which can turn to either the good or the bad.”⁸

Stacey concludes:

From the heart springs conduct, both good and bad. Emotions, decisions, intentions or judgments, seated in the heart, may be praiseworthy or otherwise. Good powers or bad powers can act upon it from without.⁹

⁸ Stacey at 196.

⁹ *Ibid.*

Dunn writes of Paul's meaning of "heart" as:

The inward person ("the real you"...), with overtones of wholehearted, sincere, complete commitment stemming from the integrating center of man as a rational, emotional, volitional being.¹⁰

Jewett sets out the heart as Paul's view of:

[Man's] intentionality; the heart as the center of man is thought of as the source of will, emotion, thoughts and affections.¹¹

So as we unfold the question, "Who are you?" from Paul's perspective, we start with the recognition that within us is a place of emotions, moral judgments, will and volition, which can accept or reject God. We should not try to wrap this around a certain organ in the body, nor should we consider it simply a matter of the brain's processing. It is beyond that. It speaks of the inner man that might work through and include such things, but it is more. It is a place of God's indwelling and communion with man. It is a place that brings us opportunities to grow in godliness. We shall learn more of it as we consider it in light of other terms of Paul's in the coming lessons.

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *"I bow my knees before the Father...that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith"* (Eph. 3:17).

If our heart is the seat of our will, a part that accepts or rejects the Lord, and our seat of ethical judgment, then how important is it to have Christ dwelling there? We should be praying as Paul did! Oh, to have Christ dwell within us, turning our wills to God's will, adjusting our ethics to God's ethics, bringing our faith into line with the Faithful One. May we join Paul in this prayer! Similarly, as we face our issues and decisions, may we look to Jesus for the wisdom on how to proceed and seek his strength as we try to do so!

2. *"God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, 'Abba! Father!'"* (Gal. 4:6).

Every morning when you put on your clothes, think about the covering you are giving to your outward appearance. Then, take a moment and think about the

¹⁰ James D. G. Dunn, Word Bible Commentary – Romans 1-8 (Nelson 1988)

¹¹ Jewett at 448.

appearance of your inward self. For God has sent the Holy Spirit into your heart, your inner being, to draw you closer to him. Amen!

3. *“The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart”* (1 Tim. 1:5).

If the heart can issue forth actions that have moral aspects and judgments, then let us seek to purify our hearts before the Lord. Let us seek to serve him with our thoughts and decisions. Let us lay our hearts before him.