**God Knows My Heart**

I admit that at some point, I became fed up with hearing the phrase “God knows my heart.” Typically, I hear this used as an excuse for some sinful behavior – “I know that [whatever I just said/did] is wrong, but God knows my heart.” The idea being that, even though I know what I just did was wrong, God knows that deep down I’m a pretty good person – so I think he’ll overlook my sinful behavior. We may hear this said about profanity and inappropriate conversation, lewd clothing or behavior, angry outbursts at spouses and children, gossip about our brothers and sisters in Christ, and the list could continue. While this way of using the phrase “God knows my heart” is tiring, we cannot let it distract us from the *truth* of the statement. It is a deeply biblical concept that God knows my heart!

God must know the heart to say “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). While arguing that Gentile Christians do not need to be circumcised, Peter states that “God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us” and based on this knowledge, God “cleansed their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9). Certainly, God knows my heart, a fact which brings incredible comfort to someone who has set his heart to follow Jesus!

However, it is equally true that “God knows my heart” can be a sobering warning. God sent a world-wide flood because “every intention of the thoughts of [mankind’s] heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5). The book of Ecclesiastes ends with a reminder that God will “bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing” (Eccl. 12:14). Jesus reminded religious leaders of his day that “you are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts” (Luke 16:15). “God knows my heart” is always a true statement; but whether it brings comfort or warning depends on what God finds in my heart!

In Psalm 139, I believe King David provides a good example of what it looks like to joyfully yet seriously consider God’s intimate knowledge of our hearts. The majority of this psalm is spent on God’s knowledge – he knows us inside and out, he knows both our thoughts and our words, he goes before us and behind us (Psalm 139:1-6). God knows our hearts even better than we do! We are never without his guidance, nor could we flee his presence if we wanted to (v.7,10). He has known us from the beginning of our existence and knows the “ins and outs” of who we are (v.13,15).

Reflecting on this, David clearly expresses he wants to be on God’s side: “Do I not hate those who hate you, O LORD? And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? … I count them my enemies” (v.21-22). David did not want to be counted among God’s enemies; he wanted to be on God’s side! This leads us to the final two verses of Psalm 139: “Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!” Because of his desire to align himself with God, David asks God to SEARCH him, TRY him, and LEAD him.

SEARCH ME: It is intimidating to consider God searching us and understanding our deepest thoughts and feelings; but we who are in Christ do not need to be frightened by this. We need to embrace the exposing light of Christ in our lives.

TRY ME: The word for “try” here can also refer to the “testing” of precious metals. If we claim to serve God and follow Jesus, then we should *want* God to refine us. The process will likely not be pleasant but will be worth every discomfort. If there is “any grievous way” in us, only God through the power of his Word and the power of his Spirit can cleanse us and sanctify us.

LEAD ME: If we understand our need for God’s refining hand, then we should also understand our need for his guidance. Jesus is the Lord we must obey (Luke 6:46). Jesus alone is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). If we are going to follow anyone, it must be Jesus. No preacher, theologian, or social media influencer can lead us in the way everlasting; no self-help book or philosopher will guide us on the narrow way; and our own desires will surely lead us astray to worship a Jesus made in our own image.

Too often, we find ourselves trying to get God “on our side;” we rationalize by any means possible why God is okay with the way we live and the decisions we make. This is futile. God knows our hearts; he knows that what we need more than anything else is Jesus. We must come to know the one, true Jesus through the Word he revealed, and we must say to him, “Search my heart, try my thoughts, and lead me in the way everlasting!”

Noah Diestelkamp  
[nadiestel@gmail.com](mailto:nadiestel@gmail.com)

September 2023