

## How's Your Spiritual Health? by Mark Jarvinen

<sup>39</sup> He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?" <sup>40</sup> The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

<sup>41</sup> "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" <sup>42</sup> How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

<sup>43</sup> "No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit.

<sup>44</sup> Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. <sup>45</sup> A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

<sup>46</sup> "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" <sup>47</sup> As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. <sup>48</sup> They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. <sup>49</sup> But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete." **(Luke 6:39-49)**

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I'm definitely at an age where a regular physical check-up with my doctor is no longer optional. Before I leave for the doctor's office, I've already asked myself the basic questions about my own health – weight fluctuation, sleep pattern, stress level, unusual physical symptoms, and pain levels. This type of self-analysis is important in order to maximize the time I spend with the doctor.

Self-analysis is important physically, but the Scriptures also encourage us to conduct a personal spiritual examination of our faith life. The Apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, ***“Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves!” (II Cor. 13:5)***. And so we do well to ask ourselves questions from time to time ***“Do I hunger and thirst after righteousness? Is my passion for Christ running hot? Do I care about the things God cares about?”***

I usually walk into my doctor’s office feeling relatively confident in the outcome of my self-analysis. But then he begins asking me more questions, things I forgot to ask myself. His experienced and well-trained hands poke and probe in places I can’t reach, with a skill I could never emulate. Now I remember why I need to be in his office. He’s the doctor.

So too, spiritually speaking, the Lord’s analysis is much more thorough and important than our own self-analysis. When the Corinthians sought to analyze Paul’s faith and ministry, he wrote in his first letter to them:

***“But to me it is a very small thing that I should be examined by you, ... in fact, I don’t even examine myself. I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord” (I Cor. 4:3-4)***.

In one context, like the one I mentioned moments ago, Paul encourages Christians to test themselves, but in another, he admonishes believers not to put too much stock in their own self-analysis. We have blind spots. We rationalize. We cut ourselves too much slack. On the other hand, sometimes we go on a self imposed guilt trip. We become what author, Paul Tripp calls ***“mercy forgetful.”*** We forget that we are loved by a gracious and merciful God. Spiritually

speaking, He's the doctor. He knows our deepest needs and what is most important for us to deal with. He wants what's best for us.

And so, from today's text let's let the doctor do His work. Let's allow Jesus, by His Spirit, to assess our spiritual health. **The Spirit says ...**

## ***I. GET AN EYE CHECK-UP (vv. 39-42)***

And so, "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit?" Also, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" It sounds like an eye check-up just might be a good idea.

Listen to the words **Dale Hurd**, a senior reporter for the **Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN)** shared in a news report a number of years ago, but which are still relevant today:

**"Times were never better. The national economy was again a powerhouse. Inflation was under control. Peace and prosperity had returned and the nation seemed to have reclaimed its former glory. Its dynamic leader was considered by many to be the most gifted statesman to ever come forth. He had the uncanny knack of giving the whole nation – everyone – a unified vision and a renewed sense of their place and mission in the world. When he spoke, he seemed to speak for everyone, and to everyone. And although there was an uneasiness over his character and the allegations of corruption that swirled around him, none of his political opponents could touch him.**

**So charming and personable was this leader that even the religious leaders overlooked his lack of integrity. For his birthday they distributed a prayer to be said in all the churches of the land. The prayer began with the words: `We thank you that in this decisive hour you have laid the destiny of our nation in his strong hands.'"**

The year? It was **1940** – a time when many nations needed and appreciated strong leadership. Who was this visionary, charismatic leader? He was none other than Germany's **Adolph Hitler**.

Hitler was not the first charismatic leader to assume power over a nation. What's so amazing in this case is the warm embrace of the Christian community to his leadership, even though there were questions about his character and allegations of corruption swirled around him. Spiritually speaking, it was a case of the blind leading the blind.

**“Somehow,”** as journalist **Dale Hurd** went on to observe, **“a nation with a great heritage lost its moral compass and critical thinking skills, and decided to follow a silver-tongued rogue who could enrich them and the national treasury. Somehow Germany, the nation that birthed the Reformation – one of the greatest spiritual renewals in all of history – fell off the moral cliff and became the nation that gave us the Holocaust.”**

**How do we fall off a moral cliff?** Leaders settle for temporal, self-centered goals and followers merely fall in step. **Leaders**, blinded by their own ambitions, give people the prosperity they long for, who then in turn blindly follow. This happens not only at a national level, but in families too. There are many reasons why certain children decide not to follow the teaching and example of their parents, yet it is interesting how some parents, who have sold out to material prosperity and personal pleasure, wonder why their children don't grow up with a strong morality and respect for authority. It's as if these parents don't see the double standard they live by. They expect attitudes and

behaviors from their children that they don't expect from themselves. And so, a generation of parents attempt to deal with the specks in their children's eyes instead of first removing the logs in their own.

Jesus said, in **v. 42** of today's text, probably in reference to the Pharisees, ***"You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."***

In other words, don't hold others to a standard you're not willing to abide by yourself. Allow the Holy Spirit to conduct a spiritual eye check-up.

## **II. GET A HEART CHECK-UP (vv. 43-45)**

In these verses Jesus begins by saying there are two kinds of trees which symbolize a man's heart. Over time, we can expect good fruit from a good tree, while an unhealthy tree will produce bad fruit. The nature of the tree determines the kind of fruit you can expect from it. In this context the heart is used figuratively to speak of the hidden character of a person's life. We can say we belong to God, but at harvest time (the day of judgment) the fruit born from our lives will give an unfailing indication of our true identity. As our text says, **"Out of the overflow of his heart, his mouth speaks."** In other words, the condition of our hearts spiritually will be revealed in the fruit of our words.

**Arthur Gordon**, an author, grew up in the South. As a southerner he understood the value placed upon conducting oneself with charm. Gordon recalls a certain society matron who received a surprise visit from a clergyman whom, for various reasons, she

despised. In spite of the matron's deep dislike for this man, however, she played the part of the gracious host. She served him tea and cookies, laughed at his jokes, complimented his latest sermon. She was, in a word, charming. But after the clergyman left, the society matron lay down on her couch and died of a massive stroke. Arthur Gordon has always wondered if the woman was overcome by the extreme effort required to be charming to someone she so disliked. (Dynamic Preaching Resources, King Duncan, 2001)

**What do you think?** Our lives have a strange way of revealing what's really in our hearts. But is there any hope for us? Who among us has not harbored in his heart thoughts that are inconsistent with a life with God? The cure for our spiritual heart problem is the good news of the Great Physician, Jesus, who took our sins upon Himself on the cross. All we need do is confess our sins and experience the forgiveness made possible by our Lord. King David, guilty of the sins of adultery and murder, turned to God and said, ***“Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:9-10).*** God forgave him and continued to call him ***“a man after my own heart.”*** He'll do the same for us.

Get an eye check-up, get a heart check-up, and thirdly...

### **III. GET AN EAR CHECK-UP (vv. 46-49)**

In v. 46, Jesus says, ***“Why do you call me Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say?”*** The Pharisees seemed to have wax in their ears. They had built the foundation of their lives on sand instead of

the rock. They had heard the Word of God but were selective in their obedience to it. Notice the test of authentic faith is not merely what one says, “**Lord, Lord,**” but in one’s obedience to the Word of God. It’s not immediately apparent to others on which foundation a house is built. From the outside, the quality can look the same. But when the floods, storms, and winds of life come along, the house built on the rock will stand.

**Mrs. Ono** was the wife of a prominent Japanese businessman and the eldest member of her own Japanese family. After a time of spiritual searching she came to faith in Christ with the help of CLB **Missionary, Morris Werdal** in the 1950’s. One day she came to Werdal and said,

***“Teacher, I have a problem. As the eldest member of my family, the care of the shrine to my dead relatives has been left to me. I now worship the one true God. I no longer worship my ancestors. Yet, my family expects me to continue this practice. What should I do?”***

Werdal showed Mrs. Ono from Scripture what idolatry is and why God hates it. But he added, ***“You face a difficult decision. I can’t tell you what to do. Ask Jesus what to do. He’ll show you.”***

Months went by. Mrs. Ono went through a terrible struggle. One afternoon she called Missionary Werdal and asked him to come to her home with his van. She said,

***“Some have told me to give the ancestor idols to another family member. Others have said, ‘Sell it.’ But I have prayed and asked Jesus what to do. He said, ‘Burn it.’ I would like to burn it on the***

***grounds of the Bible School in the presence of the other students. Can we use your van?"***

Later, as tongues of flame leaped heavenward, devouring the ancient relic, Mrs. Ono sang a hymn of praise. From that moment on, she grew rapidly in her faith. Even her husband of prominent Japanese descent, came to know Christ. Later she purchased a beautiful property in the mountains outside of Tokyo and converted it into a retreat center, which she named "**The Place of Prayer.**" Mrs. Ono had built her house upon the rock. She had heard the call to faith in Christ and understood that it was a call to obedience.

**What are the idols in our lives?** Are there things standing between us and full obedience to Christ? Are there things we must light a match to? What is Jesus saying to us this day? Jesus didn't sacrifice His life on Calvary's cross so that after coming to faith in Him we would just go on and live for ourselves. Why would we want to take advantage of His love that way? To do so is detrimental to our spiritual health. As genuine Christians, we will have a desire to submit to our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Great Physician**, for a full spiritual check-up. Ask **Dr. Jesus** to check your spiritual eyes for self-centeredness and a double standard. Ask Him to check your spiritual hearts for impurities. Finally, ask Him to check your spiritual ears for any wax-buildup that prevents us from acting on the truth. After all the tests are in and we're aware of our failures, confess them and turn to our Great Physician for His spiritual healing and forgiveness made possible by His work on the cross. **A-men.**