

#33 Northside Natter

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Today, I'm taking a brief look at **A Divided Heart**.

Hosea 10:7

Israel is an empty vine, he brings forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he has increased the altars; according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their hearts are divided: now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images.

Hosea 11:1-2

And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him.

When we read these scriptures, we can see how obviously the children of Israel had corrupted themselves. Every altar they built drove another nail into their coffins. They had forgotten where they came from. They had forgotten the 430 years in Egypt with 400 of those years in slavery. They had forgotten how the mighty arm of God brought them forth from that bondage and guided them safely to a land of milk and honey. They had forgotten they were children of the most-High God.

Matthew 6:24

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

How true. The Israelites proved without a doubt that we cannot afford to have a divided heart. We cannot serve two masters and still remain loyal to both. The human heart is not able to remain impartial: it will always choose sides. The question today is: whose side are we on?

We may think we're on God's side. We may believe that he is our all in all. We may feel that our heart belongs to him and none other. But what if we, in truth, have a divided heart?

A divided heart, or divided loyalties, can be clearly seen in the choices we make. Do we forsake the calling to worship? Do we tell ourselves that we're too busy to help another in need? Do we choose some other activity to attend instead of attending to the Lord's requirements?

There will, of course, be times when we are given little choice. For example, a family member may be in dire straits and beg for our help. For the sake of our testimony, we might go to that family member and help him instead of attending a meeting. This is a rare occurrence and not the type of thing, on its own, that indicates a divided heart. However, if we make a habit of jumping to all the demands of worldly family members, we are suddenly caught. Our loyalties are divided and those family members will always make certain that their demands are made for the days the meetings are held.

Luke 14:26

If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes even their own life – such a person cannot be my disciple.

This is a poor translation. Why? Because God would never instruct us to hate our families. What this scripture means is that when it comes to doing the Lord's work, we must disregard family pressures on our time and do his work first. Even to putting our own special projects last. It means our priorities are the Lord's priorities. God should get the cream, not the dregs. Why? Because God purchased us with the blood of his Christ. God is our master and we are his servants. This is the cost of our salvation, yet worth so much more than we can ever pay.

Our loyalties must not be compromised. Either we follow God or we follow after earthly pleasures. Either we are loyal to God, or we are loyal to this world.

When we take on the responsibility of a born-again Christian, God becomes our master. In spiritual matters, we are not free to do as we please.

The Israelites lost sight of this understanding and went into captivity for their divided hearts. They became the slaves of others whose cruelty and oppression knew no bounds. They died in want and suffering while their land of milk and honey was given to others.

If we do not make the Lord our God the king of our hearts, we will become captives to those things that we harbour in our hearts and we will be cast out into the world. Why? Because a little leaven will leaven the whole lump and God will not suffer his church to become corrupted by a divided heart.

There is now no further remedy for his children. He has given his all to undo the wiles of Satan. God's sheep will hear his voice and will follow him anywhere. Yet, we are told that the Laodicean church becomes lukewarm. A divided heart will lead to that outcome. A divided heart does as it pleases. A divided heart puts its own pleasures before its duty to its master. A divided heart has lost its loyalty and cannot be expected to receive the reward of eternal life.

When Noah built the ark, he used a great deal of wood. He made sure he could source enough timber to complete the job. When Jesus built the first church, he made sure he had enough men to complete the task. When we build a church, we do the same.

What would have happened to the ark if Noah was unable to source enough timber? What would have happened if Jesus couldn't find enough men? What happens when church members stop coming, stop participating in meetings, don't turn up for their assigned roles, stay away from activities and other events? The church dwindles and fades away. There is no church.

What a tragedy! Decades of hard work just slip through the cracks in the floor boards. Is this the outcome we want for ourselves, our children, our friends and family members? No, because it means there is no salvation message going out. It means Satan has won. It means there is now no further remedy to save God's creation. Is that what God wants?

Luke 18:8

I tell you, that He will avenge them [his own elect] speedily, nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, shall he find faith on the earth?

Jesus taught us how to secure our salvation and retain the promises of God. He showed us how to maintain our place in the kingdom to come. This kingdom is not too far off. It is a kingdom in which the King of kings shall rule, and we as priests and kings will rule with him. Is that an outcome worth fighting for? Yes.

We can only achieve this through single-mindedness and an undivided heart. If we foster anything else in ourselves, it will lead to apathy and before long, we are no longer serving our master but serving ourselves along with this world. There are too many gods in our world: sporting gods, movie gods, pleasure gods, money gods. You name it, there's a god for it. They carry too many away with them.

We cannot forget where we came from. We cannot afford to forget how God lifted us up out of the miry clay, set our feet on a solid foundation, cleaned up our lives and taught us the right way to live. We cannot forget his mercies, loving kindness, forgiveness, healings and abundant blessings.

We must heed the warning of the scriptures. There is only one God, one way of life, one destiny worth having and only an undivided heart will keep us on that path.