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Episode 207 - The Heart is Deceived
How are idols of the heart created?
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Jerry Green:

Welcome, friends, to this March 8th season of Faith Made Simple with our pastor and teacher, Todd Smith. I'm Jerry Green, and for the past seven seasons, I've had the privilege of serving as host of the podcast, and we're so grateful the Lord has afforded us the opportunity to meet with you each week and share his infallible word. Our teacher, Pastor Todd, has a passion for explaining Scripture because, as we've said all along. Understanding and obeying God's Word is key in the Christian's life. James 1:25 tells us that God blesses those who are obedient. So let's listen now as Todd shares his thoughts for today.

Todd Smith:

On today's podcast, I want to talk about the idea of guarding our heart, because there is a temptation to fall into sin when we don't. We've been looking at Matthew 15 where Jesus confronts the Pharisees and he's speaking to his disciples in essence, and he—well, he just finished up last week on this.

It was basically a parable, because he told them the story that what proceeds out of the mouth is what defiles a person. It's not the traditions of men, the food that goes into their mouths. It's actually what comes out of the mouth, because what comes out of the mouth comes from the heart.

Jesus is the master teacher—always using illustrations. Peter isn't always the sharpest knife in the drawer, so in verse 15 of chapter 15, right after Jesus tells that story, it says, but Peter said to him, “Can you explain this parable to us?” In other words, can you run this past us one more time?

And in verse 16 Jesus answers, “Are you also still without understanding?” Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person.

Here's the key: out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander. He's not giving an exhaustive list but an essential one—showing that all of that behavior comes out of the heart. The Pharisees and scribes were picky about food—“Don't eat this, make sure you eat that”—but that's just food. What

comes out of the heart is what truly defiles a man or woman. Jesus says outward sin is a heart issue.

External sin is an internal disease. Too often we try to modify behavior without dealing with heart issues. When battling personal sin, are we going to do behavior modification so that a particular sin happens less, or are we going to cultivate a heart that's sensitive to what is sinful and what is holy? We're driving back to motives—the attitude of the heart—asking what is driving us.

It's easy, like in medicine, to treat symptoms and never the disease. If we're just in symptom management—"take this verse and you'll feel better in the morning"—we've missed the point. I want to deal with the root: why do I keep acting selfish in this situation? What's the driving force in my life? Why am I wanting to sit on the throne of my own life in this area?

It comes back to idolatry—whoever sits on the throne of your heart is the god of your life. As John Calvin said, "The human heart is an idol factory," so the heart is the location of the disease. Whatever idol sits on that throne is calling the shots. I also think of the heart as a trophy room—the trophies we put on the shelf become our motivations.

I love the applause and praise of man, and that can become the driving motivation. Trophies are fine when given for the right reasons. But what are we valuing? What are we daydreaming about? One clue to where your heart is: what you catch yourself daydreaming about while driving. Are your thoughts heavenly or earthly? What are the things that bring you pleasure? What is your trophy case?

Let me lead you through a few questions to distinguish love from like, because that difference helps reveal idols of the heart: Do you love to be esteemed but just like being honest? Do you love to get but just like to give? Do you love sex but simply like being faithful? Do you love being heard but just like to listen? Do you love to spend but merely like to save? Loves and likes help determine idols in our heart.

I want my trophy case full—full of trophies that are there for the right motivations and behaviors, the ones that honor the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jerry Green:

Thanks, Todd. Before we go to a couple of questions, let me take a moment and remind our friends that Faith Made Simple is a free ministry, and you can participate with us by subscribing and sharing on social media. It also helps if you leave a comment and a rating. You know, Todd, we can create idols in our life and not even know we're creating idols. It can be very subtle. How are idols of the heart created?

Todd Smith:

I think we get our eyes on the wrong thing and take pleasure in it. One reason we keep sinning is because sin delivers what it promises—immediate satisfaction. It's kind of like Pavlov's dog: we get conditioned to want that immediate gratification, and we fall into patterns of behavior that are not set apart for the Lord.

Jerry Green:

That reminds me of Paul in Romans 7—things I want to do I don't do; things I don't want to do I end up doing. There's a tension in us; we want to do right, but we must examine why we do it.

Todd Smith:

Right. We need to play it out—if I chase down that idol, where do I end up in two weeks or two years? Use your head: immediate gratification may feel good now, but it often doesn't end well.

Jerry Green:

Usually the bottom line is we want recognition. It's hard to take a back seat and let someone else have the recognition.

Todd Smith:

Absolutely.

Jerry Green:

And that, my friend, brings us to the end of this episode of season eight. Lord willing, we'll be back next week with another podcast. We wouldn't sign off without inviting you to visit us at Crossroads Community Church in Valencia, California, where God's Word is taught verse by verse. If you would like more information about the podcast or the church, visit our website at FaithMadeSimple.net. So, on behalf of Todd and the team here at Faith Made Simple, we look forward to our next visit. Until then, live blessed by being a doer of God's Word.