

AMAZIAH
A Divided Heart
II Chronicles 25

I. Meet Good King Amaziah.

The life of Amaziah, as recorded in II Chronicles 25, can be divided into three basic periods:

- General statement about his life (vv. 1-2).
- Godly and victorious (vv. 3-13).
- Idolatrous and defeated (vv. 14-28).

A. A general statement about his life.

*Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoadan of Jerusalem. ² And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet not with a **whole heart** (vv. 1-2).*

Other translations shed further light on this summary statement in verse 2. *Amaziah did what was right in the eyes of the Lord:*

- ...but not **wholeheartedly** (NIV).
- ...but not with a **perfect heart** (KJV).
- ...yet not with a **blameless heart** (RSV).
- ...but not with a **loyal heart** (NKJV).
- ...yet not with a **true heart** (NRSV).
- ...but he did not really want to obey him (New Century Version).
- He lived well before GOD, doing the right thing for the most part. But he wasn't wholeheartedly devoted to God (The Message).

Reading the account in II Kings 14:1-20 helps us to better understand what is meant.

*And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, yet **not like David** his father. He did in all things **as Joash** his father had done (II Kings 14:3).*

When we studied the life of good King Joash, we learned that he suffered from "fickle faith." He was a **thermometer** when God called him to be a thermostat. He reflected his environment rather than regulating it. He was a follower rather than a leader. David, on the other hand, though periodically prone to moral failures, set the standard for all future kings in that he had a heart like God's.

*The LORD has sought out a man **after his own heart**, and the LORD has commanded him to be prince over his people... (I Samuel 13:14).*

Unfortunately, Amaziah's heart resembled that of his father, Joash rather than that of David. He was partially devoted.

B. Godly and victorious.

1) Obedience to the law.

³ And as soon as the royal power was firmly his, he killed his servants who had struck down the king his father. ⁴ But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the Law, in the Book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, "Fathers shall not die because of their children, nor children die because of their fathers, but each one shall die for his own sin" (vv. 3-4).

In his zeal to restore the kingdom and establish justice in the land, it would have been easy for Amaziah to destroy not only the assassins but their families as well. But no, he allowed the law of God to establish the parameters of his behaviors. Even though he was the king, he knew he was still under the law.

2) Able to receive correction; teachable.

⁵ Then Amaziah assembled the men of Judah and set them by fathers' houses under commanders of thousands and of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were 300,000 choice men, fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. ⁶ He hired also 100,000 mighty men of valor from Israel for 100 talents (7,500 pounds) of silver. ⁷ But a man of God came to him and said, "O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel, with all these Ephraimites. ⁸ But go, act, be strong for the battle. Why should you suppose that God will cast you down before the enemy? For God has power to help or to cast down." ⁹ And Amaziah said to the man of God, "But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?" The man of God answered, "The LORD is able to give you much more than this." ¹⁰ Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim to go home again. And they became very angry with Judah and returned home in fierce anger. ¹¹ But Amaziah took courage and led out his people and went to the Valley of Salt and struck down 10,000 men of Seir. ¹² The men of Judah captured another 10,000 alive and took them to the top of a rock and threw them down from the top of the rock, and they were all dashed to pieces. ¹³ But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, raided the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-horon, and struck down 3,000 people in them and took much spoil (vv. 3-13).

Though Amaziah's decision to hire unbelieving mercenaries to supplement his army was a mistake, he was able to receive correction and amend his ways! He was teachable. This enabled God to continue to bless him and the people for whom he was responsible.

C. Idolatrous and defeated.

For Amaziah, his greatest failure came not after a great catastrophe or time of suffering, but after a mighty, God-given victory!

¹⁴ After Amaziah came from striking down the Edomites, he brought the gods of the men of Seir and set them up as his gods and worshiped them, making offerings to them. ¹⁵ Therefore the LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, "Why have you sought the gods of a people who did not deliver their own people from your hand?" ¹⁶ But as he was speaking, the king said to him, "Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be struck down?" So the prophet stopped, but said, "I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my counsel" (vv. 14-16).

What would prompt Amaziah to take the gods of the people he had just defeated in battle and bring them home to worship as his own???

- Desire to imitate the life-style of others.
- Desire to appear broad-minded, tolerant, open.
- Desire to show off and manifest his power to folks at home.
- Stupidity.

No longer is Amaziah teachable and open to correction. For some reason, his heart has changed and rather than heeding the voice of God... he silences it! From this point on, things go from bad to worse.

¹⁷ Then Amaziah king of Judah took counsel and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us look one another in the face." ¹⁸ And Joash the king of Israel sent word to Amaziah king of Judah, "A thistle on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, 'Give your daughter to my son for a wife,' and a wild beast of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thistle." ¹⁹ You say, 'See, I have struck down Edom,' and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. But now stay at home. Why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?" (vv. 17-19).

Amaziah would not listen to a prophet sent from God (v. 15) but maybe he would listen if God spoke to him through his enemy! Though king Joash of Israel was a pagan, his words to Amaziah contain godly counsel! Don't let pride in past victories make you blind in pursuing present ambitions.

Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall. (Prov. 16:18)

Beware! If we turn a deaf ear to the normal channels God uses to communicate his truth (the Bible, preaching, Christian counsel, etc.), then God may choose to speak to us in very unorthodox ways: a talking donkey, foreigners, unbelievers, etc. In these instances especially we see that often with God, the medium is the message.

Tragically, Amaziah's heart was too proud, too stubborn and too self-absorbed to respond to God's call... either in a prophet or a pagan king. The results of such willful deafness are predictable.

²⁰ But Amaziah would not listen, for it was of God, in order that he might give them into the hand of their enemies, because they had sought the gods of Edom. ²¹ So Joash king of Israel went up, and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced one another in battle at Bethshemesh, which belongs to Judah. ²² And Judah was defeated by Israel, and every man

fled to his home. ²³ And Joash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem for 400 cubits (about 600 feet), from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. ²⁴ And he seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, in the care of Obed-edom. He seized also the treasuries of the king's house, also hostages, and he returned to Samaria.

²⁵ Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of Joash the son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. ²⁶ Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? ²⁷ From the time when he turned away from the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish and put him to death there. ²⁸ And they brought him upon horses, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David (vv. 20-28).

Table Talk

1. What part of Amaziah's life speaks to you the most? Why?
2. Why do you think Amaziah wanted to worship the gods of his enemy?
3. Why are we so often deaf to God speaking to us through His "normal channels" of communication (Word, preaching, etc.)?
4. Has there ever been a time in your life when God spoke to you in a surprising, unorthodox manner? Through a "donkey"? In what sense was the medium the message?
5. Discuss how Amaziah's life is the logical result of the truth stated in verse 2: *He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart.*

II. A Spiritual EKG.

Although Amaziah is described as someone who "did what was right," he ended up in idolatry and a refusal to reform his ways! Furthermore, his rebellion against God led his nation to defeat, poverty and national shame (Jerusalem's wall was torn down!). How can we account for such a tragic end? The Bible answers this question: Amaziah's problem was **heart disease**. *He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, yet not with a whole heart* (v. 2).

*Here is the general character of Amaziah: He did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, worshipped the true God, kept the temple service going, and countenanced religion in his kingdom; but he did not do it with a perfect heart (v. 2), that is, he was not a man of serious piety or devotion himself, nor had he any zeal for the exercises of religion. He was no enemy to it, but a **cool** and **indifferent** friend. Such is the character of too many in this Laodicean age: they do that which is good, but not with the heart, not with a perfect heart. (Matthew Henry's Commentary)*

Amaziah never came to a place of single-minded devotion. His motives were mixed, his commitment was partial, his loves were divided. He was a **double-minded** man.

Using Amaziah as a spring board, the remainder of this study will focus on what the Bible has to say about the "heart," challenging each of us to conduct our own spiritual EKG (electrocardiogram).

A. The heart of the matter is the matter of the heart.

In the Old Testament, the "heart" (Hebrew, LEB) refers to the **governing center** of a person's life. Though the term occasionally refers to the muscle in the chest that pumps blood through the body (I Sam. 25:37; II Sam. 18:14; II Kings 9:24), usually the term has a broader meaning.

*The Hebrews thought in terms of subjective experience rather than objective, scientific observation, and thereby avoided the modern error of over-departmentalization. It was essentially the whole man, with all his attributes, physical, intellectual, and psychological, of which the Hebrew thought and spoke, and the heart was conceived of as the governing center of all of these. It is the heart which makes a man, or a beast, what he is (Prov. 16:23; 23:7; Dan. 4:16) and governs all his actions (Prov. 4:23). **Character, personality, will, mind** are modern terms which all reflect something of the meaning of "heart" in its biblical usage. (The New Bible Dictionary, p. 509)*

Several verses remind us of the centrality of the "heart" in biblical thought.

- *Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the **springs of life**. (Prov. 4:23)*
- *For as he thinks in his heart (soul), so is he. (Prov. 23:7. NKJV)*
- *I the Lord search the heart. (Jer. 17:10)*

B. Three diagnostic methods.

There are three primary ways to obtain information on the true condition of our hearts.

1) **Self** examination.

Some heart problems are easy to detect. A simple self-examination will reveal the truth.

- ***Examine** yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. **Test** yourselves. Or do you not realize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you fail to meet the test! (II Cor. 13:5)*
- *Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person **examine** himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (I Cor. 11:27-28)*

2) **Word** examination.

Like a surgeon's scalpel, the Word of God cuts and exposes the deepest and most secret places of the soul.

*¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the **thoughts** and **intentions** of the **heart**. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. (Heb. 4:12-13)*

3) **Spirit** examination.

Thankfully, we are not left to self-diagnosis alone. Our heart is so diseased and so **deceitful** it may fail to tell us that is diseased! God has given us his very Spirit who is able to conduct a thorough and infallible heart examination.

***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!
(Psalm 139:23-24).*

C. Heart disease.

The Scriptures help us to understand that there are multiple types of heart disease. Finding a cure will depend in large measure on an **accurate diagnosis** of the specific problem.

1) An **evil** heart.

Without the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, human hearts are all diseased with sin. The problem is worse than you think!

*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every intention** of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually**.
(Gen. 6:5)*

2) A **hard** heart.

Medically, arteriosclerosis (hardening of the arteries) is life threatening. Spiritually, the hardening of the heart has the capacity to destroy one's very soul. Pharaoh is the classic example.

- *But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite (from the frog plague), he **hardened his heart** and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. (Ex. 8:15)*

- *For this people's heart has become **calloused**; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. (Matt. 13:15. NIV)*
- *Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, 'They always **go astray in their heart**; they have not known my ways.' As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter my rest.'" (Heb. 3:7-11)*

3) A **deceived** heart.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the LORD **search the heart** and test the mind (kidneys), to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." (Jer. 17:9-10)*

Self-deception is perhaps the deadliest of all forms of spiritual heart disease in that, by definition, it cannot recognize that it is sick! The New Testament has numerous warnings against self-deception and gives very practical advice on how to spot it!

- *For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he **deceives** himself (Gal. 6:3)*
- *Do not be **deceived**: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. (Gal. 6:7-8)*
- *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be **deceived**: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. (I Cor. 6:9-10)*
- *Do not be **deceived**: "Bad company ruins good morals." (I Cor. 15:33)*
- *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, **deceiving** yourselves. (James 1:22)*
- *If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but **deceives** his heart, this person's religion is worthless. (James 1:26)*
- *If we say we have no sin, **we deceive** ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:8-9)*

4) A **divided** heart.

This was Amaziah's problem. He did what was right, "but not with a whole heart" (II Chron. 25:2). This disease describes the person who genuinely wants to follow Christ but at the same time genuinely wants to also follow the **world**, the **flesh** and the **devil**.

- *For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not **wholly true** to the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. (I Kings 11:4)*
- *³³ So they feared the LORD but **also** served their own gods, after the manner of the nations from among whom they had been carried away... ⁴¹ So these nations feared the LORD and **also** served their carved images. Their children did likewise, and their children's children—as their fathers did, so they do to this day. (II Kings 17:33, 41)*
- *No one can serve **two masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Matt. 6:24)*

Whether God has 10%, 50% or 99% of a man's devotion, the results are the same. He is a double-minded man, **unstable in all his ways**. (James 1:8)

D. A healthy heart.

So what does a healthy heart look like? What are the characteristics of a strong spiritual EKG?

1) A **hungry** heart.

- *O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalm 63:1)*
- *Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matt. 5:6)*

Ironically, healthy hearts are at the same time content and discontent... satisfied and hungry... **full** and **empty**. They never have enough of God!

2) A **worshipping** heart.

- *I will give thanks to the LORD with my **whole heart**; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. (Psalm 9:1-2)*
- *But I have trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation. (Psalm 13:5)*

- *A joyful heart is good **medicine**, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones. (Prov. 17:22)*

Just as disease and health cannot co-exist, so a heart full of worship and praise automatically **expels** all sin.

3) A **contrite** heart.

- *For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will **confess** my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. (Psalm 32:3-5)*
- *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:17)*
- *For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite." (Isa. 57:15)*
- *Thus says the Lord: But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and **trembles** at my word. (Isa. 66:2)*

The contrite heart is the humble heart, teachable, open to correction, ready to confess sin and acknowledge weakness. These are the conditions in which spiritual life flourishes!

4) A **fixed** heart.

- *My heart is steadfast (fixed), O God, my heart is steadfast! (Psalm 57:7)*
- *For the righteous will never be moved; he will be remembered forever. He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD. His heart is steady; he will not be afraid... (Psalm 112:6-8)*
- *You keep him in **perfect peace** whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock. (Isa. 26:3-4)*

Like a lighthouse shining its beacon over a stormy sea where all is in chaotic motion, so the healthy heart is solid, unmovable, steadfast... a **fixed point** of which anchors the soul during the storms of life.

5) A pure heart.

- *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart... (Psalm 24:3-4)*
- *Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. (Psalm 51:10-12)*
- *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matt. 5:8)*
- *The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. (1 Tim. 1:5)*

The Gospel is more interested in purity than it is in maturity. Gold is pure when it has been cleansed (by fire!) of any impurities or alloys. It is simply gold. So with the heart. It is pure when it is simple... single... unmixed... free from all pollutants. As Soren Kierkegaard put it: Purity of heart is to will one thing.

6) A Spirit-filled heart.

- *Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the LORD rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah. Now the Spirit of the LORD departed from Saul... (1 Sam. 16:13-14)*
- *And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:8-9)*

Our divine cardiologist has provided the primary means through which our hearts can be healthy and strong: the Holy Spirit. Through the varied ministries of the Spirit (convicting, consoling, guiding, teaching, healing, sanctifying, gifting, anointing, etc.), the heart can remain in a constant state of health.

7) An undivided heart.

For a season of David's life, he experienced a divided heart. This led him (like Amaziah) into all manner of sins and rebellion. However, unlike Amaziah, David was able to find a cure for his heart disease. We see this mainly in his prayer in Psalm 86:11.

- *Give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. (NIV)*
- *Unite my heart to fear your name. (ESV)*
- *Give me singleness of heart to fear your name. (NKJV. Marginal reading.)*

E. What God wants.

- *But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." (I Samuel 16:7)*
- *For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to give strong support to those whose heart is blameless (whole, entire, complete, perfect) toward him. (II Chron. 16:9)*

Table Talk

1. What is the Divine Cardiologist saying to you this morning? What is your spiritual EKG indicating?
2. Look again at the symptoms of heart disease spelled out in pages 6-8. Talk about the symptoms that best describes your own experience.
3. Look again at the symptoms of a healthy heart (pages 8-10). Can the grace of God *really* produce spiritual health like this? Just what can the blood of the Lamb and the fire of the Spirit accomplish in a person's heart???? What should we expect God to do? What should we ask Him to do? What should we believe Him to do?
4. Pray for one another.