

Can you feel the underlying tension that lies in this song? There is an inner struggle. I think we can all relate. There are times when we find ourselves buried up to our necks in commitments of good things that we want to do for God. We end up burned out and none of them are being done with a right attitude. The Israelites were bringing their sacrifices and burnt offerings to God and wondering why He wasn't hearing and answering their prayers. God was looking at their hearts that were far from Him. He wasn't just looking for good things done in the name of religion. He wanted a relationship with His children. One where they would love, trust and obey Him. God still wants the same thing with His children today; a vital relationship. He's not just looking for good deeds done for Him. He wants our hearts given over to Him out of gratefulness for what He's done for us, so He can do good things through us. A pure heart recognizes we really can do nothing (of eternal value) apart from abiding in Him.

I found myself in the midst of a deep struggle. I was trying my best to do the things that I thought God wanted me to do. Things were not going well and seemed to fall short of being successful every time. Why wasn't God paying attention? Why did it seem like He was blessing other's service to Him and not mine? It felt like God was playing favorites and I wasn't one of them. I called it my "Cain Syndrome" (Genesis 4:1-5)

I was going through a season of deep pain and loss. The grief of losing my dad and dear father-in-law from cancer had worn me down. For so much of my Christian life I had grown in my faith. I had been able to push past the fears, and insecurities along with envy, jealousy, guilt, resentments, etc that had threatened to hold me back from following the Lord Jesus. I could muster up the strength to resist them, but these emotions were always there deep inside, waiting to consume me when my guard was down.

The self-confidence that had carried me for so many years was gone. I was at the bottom, feeling broken and helpless; realizing my desperate need for God. This was the place where God began to help me trust Him in a much deeper way. He allowed me to see the deep roots of rejection and insecurity and then the pride and self sufficiency that I had put on like a mask to guard my wounded heart from further injury. I had developed that tough self protective inner shield in response to being hurt so many times. I had buried so much and it was finally being brought to the surface. Only as I dropped my shield and opened my heart, could He bind up my broken heart. His



Scripture reading:

Isaiah 1:11a Amp To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me [unless they are the offering of the heart]? Says the Lord.

Psalms 51:10 Amp Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right, persevering, and steadfast spirit within me

Psalms 51:17 Amp My sacrifice [the sacrifice acceptable] to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart [broken down with sorrow for sin and humbly and thoroughly penitent], such, O God, You will not despise.

Acts 17: 24-25 The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth...And He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

fresh waves of mercy continue to wash over me as I recognize and confess my own sinful responses that I had used to cope all those years and trust Him to be my Shield. I cry out to Him for insight and He answers my prayers. He exposes lies from the devil that have held me in bondage. He reveals His powerful truth that sets me free.

A pure heart is not about arriving at a place of success in the practice of religious duty. It is a heart that sees its own human depravity apart from Jesus Christ, accepts His sacrificial death on the cross to pay for that sin. In humility we receive God's love, grace and mercy and out of gratefulness we live in a place of utter dependence on God. It's a daily process of dying to self and allowing His *Holy Spirit* to "purify" and make us new and work through us. The road of brokenness is the path to a "Pure Heart"