

The apostle Paul tells us in *Ephesians 4:32* ***And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.*** Today I want us to focus on one of those characteristics and that is “*tender hearted.*” In doing so, I want to look at the Old Testament king Josiah. Josiah is described in 2 Kings 22:19 as having a “tender heart.” *Kings 22:19* ***Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof,***

Let us examine the heart of Josiah to see what it was that led to his tenderness. To do so we first need to consider his back ground. His reign over Judah was dark days in the kingdom. For 55 years his grandfather, Manasseh had harshly ruled over Judah – a reign of evil and terror. So terrible were his murderous ways that it was said that the streets of the capital were washed with blood from one end to the other. It took being conquered by an enemy nation to shake Manasseh and he returned to God at a late age.

When his grandfather died and his father, Amon rose to rule at the age of 22, the evil returned in even greater proportions. In just two short years Amon was so hated and despised that his own servants plotted and murdered him in the palace. (2 Kings 21:23).

So after 50 plus years of wickedness conducted by cruel and evil kings, Josiah was crowned king at the age of 8. After so many years of darkness and bloodshed, what kind of leader would Josiah turn out to be? *2 Kings 22:2* ***And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.***

Then beginning in v10 of chapter 22 we read of a major event in Josiah’s life occurred when he was 26. Josiah had ordered the temple to be cleaned out and repaired. During the work, the priests found the book of Law in the temple. It was brought to Josiah and read to the king. Josiah tore his clothes in grief on hearing the sins of his people and he wept before God. It was in this setting that God said Josiah was a man with a tender heart.

A tender heart; in the Bible, the heart does not refer to the organ in your chest that pumps blood. The heart refers to the very core or center of a person’s being. I know people like Josiah with tender hearts that are touched by the aches and sorrows of others; hearts that share and feel the pain of others. So we see that a tender heart is not just a soft heart but a heart strong enough to bear the burdens of others. Tender hearts are not just gentle, but they are mighty in handling the tasks before them. Tender hearts are not just caring, but courageous in doing what needs to be done. Josiah had a heart pleasing to God and helpful to men. That’s the kind of heart we need.

2. **A TENDER HEART LISTENS.** Unlike the hard hearted, a tender heart listens; both to God and to others. **A tender heart trembles and listens** to God - *Amos 7:16* ***Now therefore hear thou***

the word of the LORD: ... Isa 66:5 Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; This simply shows the impact that God's word had on those of old that had tender hearts. They trembled in the presence of God's inspired teaching. A tender heart is a cultivated ground, ready to receive the seed; it listens.

A tender heart listens to others. A frequent reply from teenagers that are in trouble is "What I needed most was someone to listen to me; someone who cared enough to listen to me."

Ephesians 5:1 Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; Paul tells us that we are to be followers of God; ie take on the nature of God and one thing God does is to listen to others. The book of Psalms is filled with "He hears me" statements. For instance:

He hearkens unto the voice of my cry - Psalm 5:2

He hears the voice of my weeping - Psalm 6:8

He considers and hears me - Psalm 13:3

Over in the New Testament James tells us in James 1:19 to **Be swift to hear.** Charles Swindol tells this story. "I was snapping at my wife and our children, choking down my food at mealtimes, and feeling irritated at those unexpected interruptions through the day, . . . Before long, things around our home started reflecting the patter of my hurry-up style. It had become unbearable. I distinctly remember after supper one evening, the words of our younger daughter Colleen. She wanted to tell me something important that had happened to her at school that day. She began hurriedly, 'Daddy, I wanna tell you somethin' and I'll tell you really fast.' Suddenly realizing her frustration, I answered, 'Honey you can tell me – and you don't have to tell me really fast. Say it slowly.' I'll never forget her answer: 'Then listen slowly.'" Let us have a tender heart that listens to God and man

A TENDER HEART IS HUMBLE. A proud heart cannot be tender. A tender heart is humble towards God. Remember what God said of Josiah? - *Kings 22:19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof,* The prophet Isaiah reminds us that God dwells with the contrite and humble. *Isaiah 57:15 ... I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* A tender heart is humble *1 Peter 5:5 ... Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.*

If you ever have been chilled by the icy blast of a hard heart; stung by the sting of harsh words from the arrogant; hurt by the steely eyes of the proud, then you know the pain caused by a proud heart. You also know the value and comfort a tender, humble heart radiates.

“Many years ago, professor Stuart Blackie of the University of Edinburgh was listening to his students as they presented oral readings. When one young man rose to begin his recitation, he held his book in the wrong hand. The professor thundered, ‘Take your book in your right hand, and be seated!’ At this harsh rebuke, the student held up his right arm. He didn’t have a right hand! The other students shifted uneasily in their chairs. For a moment the professor hesitated. Then he made his way to the student, put his arm around him, and with tears streaming from his eyes, said ‘I never knew about it. Please, will you forgive me?’ His humble apology made a lasting impact on that young man. This story was told some time later in a large gathering of believers. At the close of the meeting a man came forward, turned to the crowd and raised his right arm. It ended at the wrist. He said, ‘I was that student. Professor Blackie led me to Christ. But he never could have done it if he had not made the wrong right.’”

Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

A TENDER HEART WEEPS. A tender heart weeps for the sins committed against God. In our text we see King Josiah weeping because of the sins of his people. **2 Kings 22:19** ***Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, ... and wept before me; I also have heard thee, saith the LORD.*** Tender hearts mourn over their sins and turn from them. They will see and feel the ugliness of sin. The burden of the guilt of sin will grieve their souls.

But it is not their own sins alone, we need tender hearted people who feel and share the tears of those around them. The prophet Jeremiah is sometimes called the weeping prophet because he wept for his people. **Jeremiah 9:1** ***Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*** In the NT we find Jesus weeping over the lost state of Jerusalem. **Luke 19:41** ***And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it.*** Paul would say to us, **Romans 12:15** ***Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.***

Jack Canfield, in “A Third serving of Chicken Soup for the Soul” would write: *There was a contest once to find the most caring child. The winner was a four-year-old child whose next door neighbor had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman’s yard, climbed onto his lap and just sat there. When his mother asked him what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said, “Nothing, I just helped him cry.”*

A TENDER HEART HELPS. The hard hearted withholds help from those who need it but a tender heart takes time to render help. God wants more than just compassion towards others. He wants us to act with compassion toward those who are less fortunate. *1 John 3:16-18 Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. (17) But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? (18) My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* In Oceanside, California, Mr. Alter's fifth-grade class made headlines when the boys in the class decided by themselves to shave their heads. They did so without embarrassment because one of their own, Ian O'Gorman, developed cancer and was undergoing chemotherapy. His hair began to fall out, so to make their friend feel at home and one of the crowd, all his classmates agreed to shave their heads (with their parent's permission), so that upon his return, Ian would not stand out in the class.

A TENDER HEART IS WILLING TO REPENT AND OBEY. We see this illustrated in Acts 8 with Simon. *Acts 8:18-22 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, (19) Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. (20) But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (21) Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. (22) Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.* Two verses later Simon asks the apostles to pray for him.

We cannot be saved without a tender heart. *Romans 10:10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* In the parable of the sower, Luke describes for us the good soil as being the one with a good and honest heart that received and kept the word. That's a tender hearted person. *Luke 8:15 But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.*

Charles Swindoll wrote the following story. *Imagine that you work for a company whose president found it necessary to travel out of the country and spend an extended period of time abroad. So he says to you and other trusted employees, "Look, I'm going to leave. And while I'm gone, I want you to pay close attention to the business. You manage things while I'm away. I will write you regularly. When I do, I will instruct you in what you should do from now until I return from this trip."*

Everyone agrees. He leaves and stays gone for a few years. During that time he writes often, communicating his desires and concerns. Finally he returns. He walks up to the front door of the company and immediately discovers everything is in a mess – weeds flourishing in the flower beds, windows broken across the front of the building, the gal at the front desk dozing, loud music roaring from several offices. Instead of making a profit, the business suffered a great loss. Without hesitation he calls everyone together and with a frown asks, “What happened? Didn’t you get my letters?” You say, “Oh yeah, sure. We got all your letters. We’ve bound them in a book. And some of us have memorized them. In fact, we have a letter study every week. You know those were really great letters.” I think the president would then ask, “But what did you do about my instructions?” And no doubt the employees would respond, “Do? Well, nothing. But we read every one!”

Those who obey the Gospel must have tender hearts. Acts 2:37-38 *Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? (38) Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

Has the gospel message touched your heart?

Invitation.