

THE NATURE OF MAN – HOW CAN WE CHANGE?

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Let's start with a question. As a Christian, as an Adventist, as a member of the present truth movement, what is my main goal in life? To be part of the 144K? To bring others into the fold? To help as many people as possible? To reflect His character? Trust and obey? To have eternal life? Isn't it all of our goal to go to heaven; to go from this earth to the new earth and have eternal life?

What does heaven even look like? Do we even have a clear idea what heaven looks like? Do we as Christians really have a clear understanding what heaven is like, a place where we really want to spend eternal life, or do we have some fairy tale idea, an idealistic notion of what we think heaven is like? As we get to know what heaven is really like, and if we were true to ourselves, some of us might say, "If that is what heaven is like, I don't want to go." Of course, no one would really say that out loud. Instead of saying, I don't want to go to heaven, you just change your view of how heaven is, and keep the traditional understanding of heaven.

Whether your view of heaven is immature or mature, whether you want to go to heaven or not, let's look at how you get to heaven. Let's say that heaven is somewhere up there in the sky, and we're down here on earth. What do we need in order to get to heaven? As individuals, what do we all need so that we can get to heaven? There are several steps that we need to trace.

So, heaven is our destination. What is the primary thing that we need? Sanctified character? To live the life and character of Christ? Meet the standard? A passport? A new body? A plan? No sin? What is the standard Adventist understanding of what we need to go to heaven? To know God? Seven steps to salvation?

COL 332.3 – *“A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the*

heavenly mansion. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important than is the development of character in this life?" So, what do we need in order to go to heaven?

In order to get to heaven, if the only thing we take with us to heaven is our character, what should we focus on? Our character. A correct character is needed for our entrance into heaven. In order to have a correct character, we need to ask ourselves, is our character OK for the moment. We would normally say, "No." So, we know that we need to have a character change. When we receive this new character, what do we call this?

What does Christ promise us that He will give us? The Bible and EGW talks a lot about it. What does Christ want to give us? A new heart. In order to get to heaven, we need to get a new heart. In order to receive a new heart, we need to have a character change. If you want to go to heaven, you need a new heart. In order to receive a new heart, we need to have a change of character.

So, what should be the next question? The next question should be, "how do I change my character?" But, before we go to that question, let's focus on this new heart.

MYP 71, 72. P1. *"A new heart also will I give you. A new spirit will I put within you, and I'll take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I'll give you a heart of flesh."* So now, the question is, "What is this new heart?" **P2.** *"Many who speak to others of the need of a new heart do not themselves know what is meant by these words. The youths, especially, stumble over this phrase "a new heart." They do not know what it means."* We suggest, neither do we.

"They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. And this, they term conversion. Over this error, thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, "Ye must be born again." EGW is addressing a problem that the people do not know what it means to have a new heart.

How can you tell if you have a new heart? When you have new heart, how do they understand that they have this new heart? In the quote above, what does it say that the new heart is based upon? Feelings. Feelings, are they in our higher nature or lower nature? Lower nature.

If we are familiar with the nature of man, we should already know that something is off here. In order to get to heaven, we need a new heart, but people think that a new heart is based upon feelings. P3. *“Satan needs people to think that because they have felt the rapture of feelings, they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and they are constantly referring to the feelings that they had on such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come their house is swept away.”*

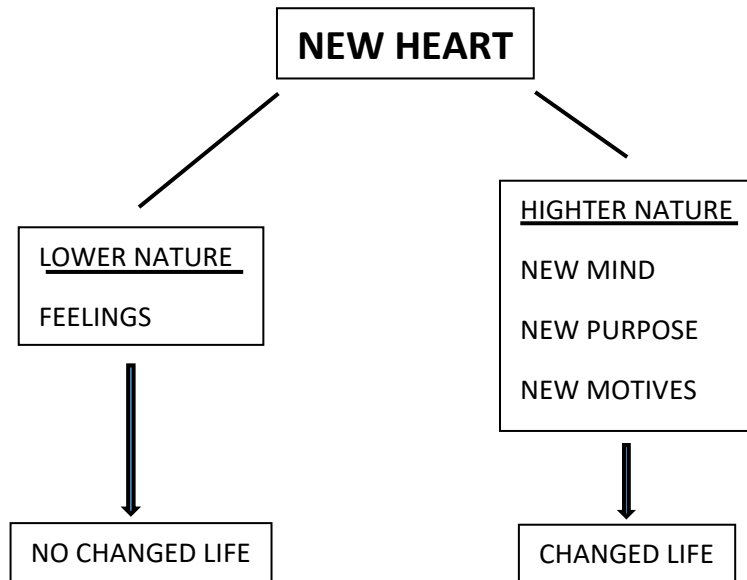
So, the people who claim to have a new heart because of their feelings, what happens to the other people around those people? P4. *“Many poor souls are groping in darkness, looking for the feelings which others say they have had in their experience.”* The answer to the problem of the person who wants to go to heaven is that this person doesn't understand what a new heart is, but this person is also a bad example that keeps others in darkness. So, EGW clarifies what a new heart is.

A new heart does not have any correlation with feelings. Claiming to have a new heart judging by the experience of feelings is wrong. Feelings are in the lower nature/power. EGW tells us what a new heart is. Pg. 72.1. *“When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ.”* What does Christ mean when He talks about this new heart?

Christ says that a new heart means the mind, the life, the whole being. What does EGW say? She says that *“To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives.”* Can we see the repeat and enlarge? So, what does EGW tell us about what a new heart looks like? A new heart is the new mind, new purposes, and new motives. These three that was mentioned above, what part of the nature of man is that? Where is the mind? The motives? The higher nature. What is the problem? People who do not understand what a new heart is, what don't they really understand? What subject do they not understand when they don't understand what the new heart is? The nature of man.

Let us now reconsider our character change. So, we have this person who wants to go to heaven. We understand that the only thing that we can take with us to

heaven is our character. And God tells us that we need a new heart. A new heart is needed to enter heaven. And EGW tells us a new heart is a new mind, new purposes, and new motives. *“What is the sign of a new heart? A changed life.”* But the difference is if you just have a changed feelings, you won’t have a changed life. People who do not understand what it means to have a new heart will base their faith upon feelings.



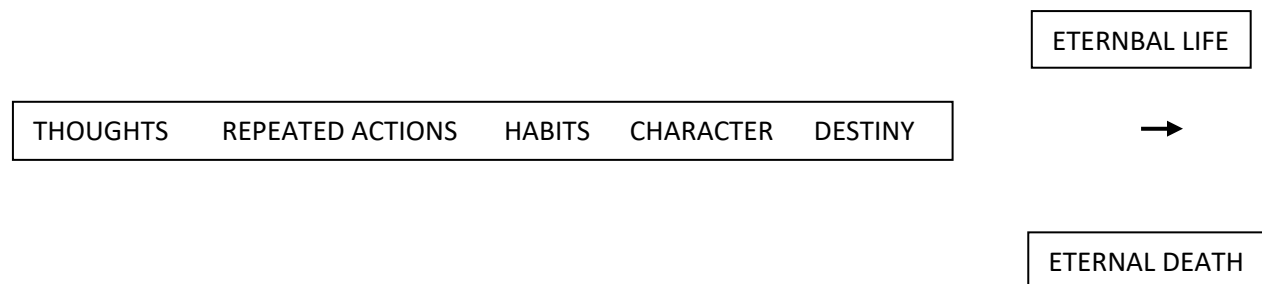
What are feelings like? How do they work? They are changeable. They come and go like waves. But in opposite, if you understand what it means to have a new heart, and it’s connected with a new mind, purposes and motives, the sign will not be changed feelings but a changed life.

When your life changes how comfortable is that? Sometimes, life changes can be nice and positive. What’s another word for change? A turning point? What does EGW say about turning points? What happens at turning points? She speaks about internal and external events, but let’s talk about personal. Turning points are crisis. And what is given at this crisis? Light is given in that crisis. You can accept it and have progress in your journey, or you can reject it. What follows when you reject the light? Shipwreck. We need to understand the nature of man. We need to understand what it means to have a new heart. It’s not about feelings. It is about a changed life – new motives, new purpose, and a new mind.

How does character change? In order to know how to change my character, what do I need to know? If I say that I want to change my character, how do I go about doing that? Follow the character of Christ? Compare and contrast? Increase of knowledge? How about you need to know how your character works. Before you can know how to change your character, you need to know how your character is put together. How is our character put together? Experiences, thoughts and feelings? Habits?

Our character is put together by habits. COL 356.2. *“Actions repeated form habits. Habits form character and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided.”* 11 MR 194.1. *“Never forget that thoughts work out actions. Repeated actions form habits and habits form character.”*

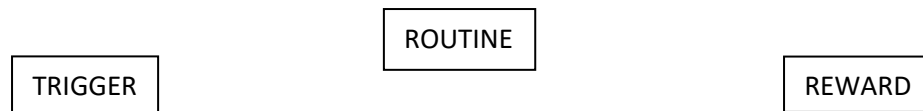
So, how are characters put together? What comes first? Thoughts come first. From thoughts come action. What do we have to do with actions? Repeated actions form habits. Habits form character. What will your character decide? Your destiny; whether you will go to heaven or not. Your character will decide whether you will have eternal life or eternal death.



When we want to go to heaven, it's important to know what it means to have a new heart. A new heart is connected with a character change. We need to understand how our character is put together in order that we can start working in ourselves to change it. One important thing to know about character change is habits. Thoughts, repeated actions, habits, make up our character.

The book, "The Power of Habits" speaks about thoughts, repeated actions, and habits. This book gives an interesting visual understanding of how habits work. The habit is the following. How does habit work? First, there must be a trigger. Something triggers you where you want a reward. In order to get there, you have a routine. During the day, our brain makes millions of small, little decisions. Our

brain tends to be very lazy. If we were to consciously make every single little millions of decisions, we would be very exhausted. So, the brain looks for patterns, or repeated actions, where the brain can switch to auto pilot and use its reserve for other important things. When you develop a habit that is exactly what happens in your brain.



There is a trigger, and your brain will switch to auto pilot, have a routine, and then you get the reward, and your brain is satisfied. What happens when we develop bad habits? I know that I need to change my character and that is equal to what? Changing my habits. So, in order to change my habits, what do I need to do? What is the first thing we need to do? If I know that I have bad habits, and I want to change my bad habits, what or whom do I need to examine? Me. Self.

I must first examine myself. I need to examine my habits. What are my habits? If I know that I have bad habits, where in this process between triggers and rewards do I need to examine? Is it the rewards or the triggers. The triggers. I know that I have bad habits, and I come into the situation where the trigger of the bad habits is active, how do I change the habits? Walk away from the trigger? Change the routine? Change the trigger? Stop doing it? But how? Form a new habit? How?

When I come into a situation where I know that I am triggered for my bad habits, when I get to the trigger, I have a split second where I can use what? What specific tool can I use to change everything? The will? What does EGW say that we need to know?

SC 47.1. When we read about the new heart, EGW told us that people have the problem that they have this feeling but nothing changes in their lives. She is describing the same situation here when she is describing the will. *“Many are inquiring, how am I to make the surrender of myself to God. You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin.”* So, every time you get to the trigger you are just a slave to the routine. The question is, how do I get out of this? *“You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections.”*

Basically, your lower powers, your lower nature is reigning over you.

“The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you;” We are slaves to our habits, but the message is teaching us that we need a changed heart, a new heart, a changed character. But, most of us are stuck in the problem of, “How?” I see the message but how do I apply it to my life?

If you are sincere about going to heaven, not the illusion about heaven, but the heaven as taught in the present truth, how heaven will be like based upon parable methodology, and you still want to go, you need to trace these steps and understand each one of them. A new heart and not feelings, controlled by higher nature is necessary – a new mind, new purposes, and new motives. When you want to receive this new heart, you need a changed character. You need to change your mind, purposes, and motives. You need a new way of thinking, a changed life.

Most of the time, a changed life comes by crisis, and a crisis starts because light was given. From this light, two groups develop. Those who accept the light and those who reject it. And what is the sign of the group that is accepting the light? What is the sign? New habits? A changed life. EGW says that this is the sign. So, to go deeper, we need to understand how our character is put together. The lines tell us that we are adults and not children. We shouldn't just be able to quote EGW, but we should be able to tell people and teach them how they can put this into practice; how they can put this message into their practical lives.

As Elder Parminder had said in the past, it is like a dead letter. The Bible or EGW's writings are like dead letter if you don't act upon these things. This is what the SDA church taught, the quotes that were read tonight, and they're nothing new, and they're common in Adventism, but they seem to be missing the sign, the sign of a changed life. This movement who is Ephesus, is closing that gap. You have the quotes on one hand, and you have your life on the other, and when both come together and join hands, what do we call that? A changed life. When we start to live what we preach, we have the combination of divinity and humanity. We become a living testimony.

EGW says that the living testimony will be revived when we have a changed heart, and in order to have this, we must understand the habits. In order to understand

our habits we need to self-analyze, we need to understand the process between the trigger and the reward, find the triggers for the bad habits in our lives, and then we need to apply what EGW is teaching in SC.

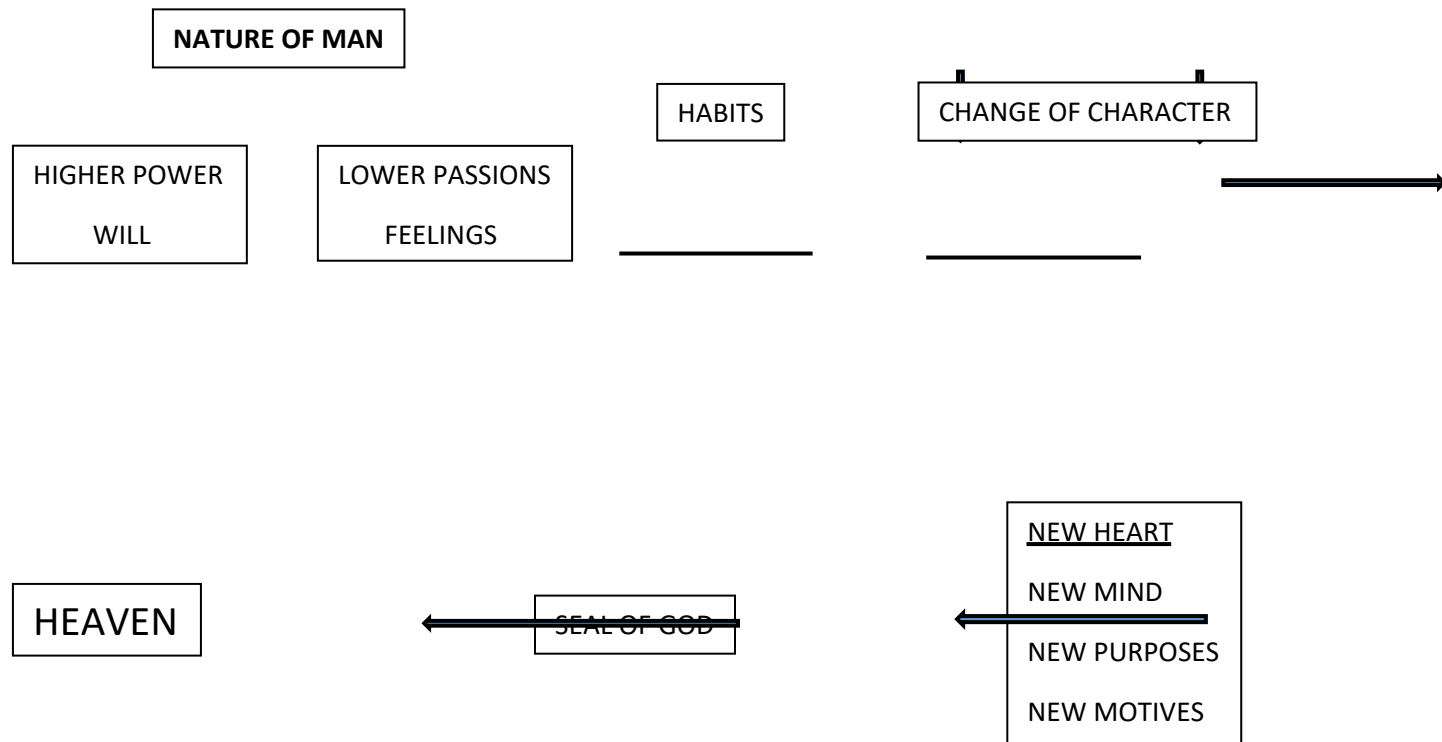
“What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. ... Through the right exercise of the will, an entire change may be made in your life.”

What we need to exercise is the will or the power of choice. If you want to have a new heart, and you want to have this change of character, it is not enough just to read the quotes, or pray long. We must get familiar with our nature. How is our character put together? Self-analyzing. What are the triggers to my bad habits? And then the secret is to use your will to change those habits, to change the routine.

We have not spend enough time to study and to understand how the will works. If the will is the turning point for us to change our lives, then is it not vital, critical, for us to understand how the will works? How much do we know about the will? How much do we know of how the will works, where it is stored, can we influence it, etc.? The interesting thing is that there is a book about the will that is written in our generation, and new understanding of how the will works. So in our generation, we are not just relegated to read a quote and say that we need to understand the will, but we can actually go into science to see how our will works.

Did you know that you have a set amount of will power? With every decision that you make during the day, your will power is depleted. It becomes less and less. Furthermore, if you don't have breakfast in the morning, your brain doesn't have enough sugar and your will power cannot work in its full capacity. What can result? Decision fatigue. Our stress for example, if you are a highly stressed person, you are more likely to deplete your will power more quickly. If you know these little things, how much can these little knowledges be useful to us in order to exercise the will power correctly? When we come to these points of the triggers, in this small split of a moment, we can choose differently, and we can start changing our habits.

What do we need to understand? What subject is key to us? What study? We have the will here, and the will is part of what study? The nature of man. We have the nature of man who helps us understand, or we see the importance of the will, and the will is key in order to change our habits. We need to understand how habits work, and how our character is influenced, in order to have a different character, in order to have this new heart. When you have this new heart, and you're spotless, God will give you what? When you cannot be moved anymore, when you're settled into the truth, what do you receive? The seal of God. So, the seal of God is the last step before entering into heaven.



In summary, the lines or the parable methodology teaches us what heaven looks like. As God's people, we desire to go to heaven. How often do we fail to put this desire into practice? There is a special need for the church of Ephesus that we understand and can live up to that expectation. We do not just preach but that we also live the life; we become and remain as the living testimony; the best witness that we can give to the Levites and the Nethinims. We need a new heart. The new heart is a new mind, new motives, and new purposes.

We need a change of character. The sign thereof is a changed life. This means that we need to change our habits. We need to self-analyze, and we need to get to know our will power. The start of this journey is the study of the nature of man. This is essential. We have useful tools to bring the message into our practical lives, but all of this would be nothing if we don't know what? What is not clarified? What are we supposed to change into? What should our character look like? How do I know what to change into? Character of Christ? This view is too simplistic. As members of this movement, we must have a broader explanation.

Prayer. Amen.