

MAN'S HEART IS EVIL

Pastor Del Wray

God's description of the heart is so accurate that I'm afraid of my own self.

The Lord's testimony concerning man's heart, all men's hearts are evil so evil that they have become dens of evil, that out of them comes evil thoughts, fornication, theft, and so on, we are driven to believe in the doctrine of the fall. If we are in this state, it is inconceivable that God should have made us so. A pure and holy being must have been the creator of pure and holy beings. As Job said, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." We may reverse the question and ask, "How could an unclean thing come out of a clean thing?" The Holy God must be the parent of holy children, and when God made manhood He must have made it perfect, otherwise He did not act according to His own nature. It remains a marvelous riddle how man is what he is till you turn to this Book, and when you read the story of the fall the riddle is all solved. Then we see how that first parent of ours, who stood for us as our representative, sinned, and by that sin tainted the whole race, so that we, being born of him, are born in his image and in his likeness, and he being a rebel we are born rebels, he being a traitor we are born traitors, too. "Behold," says David, "I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." There is the root of the matter. It is not by God's making that we are sinful; it is by Adam's unmaking of us and ruining of us that we come to be what we are, inheritors of original sin and corruption. If it shall be asked, "How is this great mystery still further to be explained, and the justice of it proved?" We answer, that these are things too deep and too high for us, that we think we can see the justice of it, and we have sometimes admired the mercy of it, too; but, nevertheless, we are not accustomed to dispute facts we cannot understand, but to believe them if God reveals them; and since it is revealed that by one man's transgression many were made sinners, we believe it, and raise no further question. We must leave the fact as a fact, feeling that it is a great deep.

You ask an explanation of this, and refuse to believe till you understand; we are obliged to refer you to all other things in nature which at the bottom must be matters of faith rather than of reason. There are ten thousand mysteries in nature which you know are there, but which you cannot understand. You cannot even tell me what electricity is, or what the attraction of gravitation is. There are these forces, for you see their effects, but how the forces first began you know not; and here is a great force which is in mankind, the force of evil, and you see its effects everywhere, but how it came there you could not have told unless God had said it came there through inheritance from your parents as the result of the fall of Adam, and there you must leave it and bow your heads. Only let this be remembered, if you would prefer every one of you to have stood or fallen for yourselves, it is more than probable you would have fallen, and if you had fallen, you would have fallen forever; for the devils, angels as they once were, stood every one upon his own footing; when, therefore, the angels fell and became

devils, they could never be saved, they were left forever to perish; but because we fell in another, and did not fall in the first place in our own persons, it became possible to restore us by the merits of Another, and we have been restored in the person of the Lord Jesus, so that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is delivered from the fall of Adam, and saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way by which we are ruined was such a way that there was a possibility of our being rescued from it, but had we been ruined by our own actual sin at the commencement, it is probable our ruin would have been like that of those evil spirits for whom are reserved chains of fire and the blackness of darkness forever. This doctrine, then, of the evil character of man necessitates the belief in the fall.

In the next place, this doctrine shows the need of a new nature. There is a young man here who says, "I mean to lead a perfectly pure and holy life. I resolve to serve God." Now should we dissuade such a man from the attempt? By no means! It has been sometimes said that we speak against morality. Never, never a word against it; but we have spoken against the attempt being made to produce purity from impurity, and we have said that such a nature as ours needs renewing before it will be holy. If it shall be said that we speak against navigation because we say that leaky vessels are not fit to put to sea, we are content that fools should so judge us; on the contrary, we hold that we are speaking for the true art of navigation when we say to the man with his water-logged vessel, "You must find another ship if you would navigate a boisterous ocean." Young man, you wish to be holy and pure, then remember that if your heart is full of theft, murder, adultery, and so on, it will always be seeking to come forth from you in word and act, and your utmost endeavors will not be able to utterly restrain the out coming of that which is there, according to Christ's word. You had better, then, instead of beginning in your own strength, stop awhile and count the cost. What if you could get a new heart and a right spirit? What if that nature of yours could be changed? What if the Divine One who made Adam perfect should make you a new? What if He should drop into you a new spark of life of a higher order than that which now possesses you? Then you would have a nature as inclined to holiness as your present nature tends to sin. Then you would, by force of a new nature, follow after that which is right, as you now naturally follow after that which is evil. "Oh," you say, "is this possible?" It is the gospel of our salvation! We tell you that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; and the process of salvation consists in part of the implantation of a new nature. By trusting in Jesus you come to love Him, and the love of Him, by the power of the Divine Spirit, becomes a master passion, a new heart, by which you war with your old passions, trample them under foot, and subdue them. As soon as you clearly see in your soul, by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus loved you, and gave Himself for you, your heart sings, "Now for the love I bear His name, What was my gain I count my loss; My former pride I call my shame, And nail my glory to His cross."

Then you have a new object for your love; instead of loving self, you love God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that new love becomes to you the heart which overcomes the old corruption, and prompts you to walk in holiness and in the fear of God all your days. Oh, young man, go not forth to this warfare till you

have considered the charges. As good men as you have sought to fight with sin, and have found its arm too strong for them. Come to the cross and ask the Savior who fought Himself with temptation and overcame it, ask Him to cleanse you from your past sins in His precious blood; ask Him to let His Divine Spirit, who is the great Regenerator, enter into you, and make you a new creature; and when you are a new creature then there shall be the new longings, the new hopes, the new fears, which shall enable you to follow a new course to the glory of God. If your heart is evil, you must get a new heart or you cannot be holy.

Do you not see how necessary it is that we should be regenerate or made new creatures, because such a heart as ours cannot possibly enter into heaven? If the natural heart is a great barracks of evil, a sort of city with a hundred gates from which black warriors of sin are continually streaming, how can such an abomination as that ever pass through the pearly gates and be where God is, before the eternal throne? O sirs, these hearts of ours, these depraved affections must be slain; they must be crucified with Christ, they must be conquered, put down, stamped out, or how can we be where Jesus is? Who can do this but the Holy Spirit? He can do it, He can do it now, He can put into you a new heart which will begin fighting with this old heart at once, which will go on fighting with it as long as you live, contending, struggling, wrestling, till at last it will drive the old loves out; your affections will no more be set on self and on evil things, but you will become as pure as God is pure, because God Himself has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. Then you shall enter heaven, then you shall dwell with angels, then you shall see God because you have been made perfectly like God by the work of the Holy Spirit. Reverence and esteem dear hearers that blessed Spirit who can make new creatures of us. Pray to Him that the old man may die in us, that it may be crucified daily; that the old nature may be buried in the tomb of the Savior, and that a new heart and right spirit in us may continually gather strength and force till they shall come to their ultimate perfection, and we shall enter into our rest.

There is another doctrine which receives also very great strength from this truth of God. If man's heart is nothing but a source of blackness and sin, admire the divine grace of God. What could have led the Lord to save such creatures as we have described if they are indeed such creatures? What but sovereign grace could look on such wretches? Those who give glory to human merit always try to puff up human nature by speaking in its praise, but we who believe human nature to be utterly fallen and debased. We admire the wonderful kindness and matchless goodness of God, that He should ever have set His love upon such unworthy creatures. Paul is in admiration of it when he says, "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." A heart full of evil thoughts, and yet He loved me! A heart full of fornication and adultery, and yet He loved me! A heart full of murder, and yet He loved me! A heart that could bear false witness, a heart that could blaspheme, and yet He loved us! O brothers and sisters, if we could see ourselves as God saw us in the fall, we should wonder how the eyes of infinite purity could have borne with us, how the heart of infinite love could have set itself upon us. You were not loved because of your goodness, you

were not chosen because of anything in you that was lovely and amiable, you were loved because He would love you; you were chosen because He would do it for His name's sake, "He saw you ruined in the fall, Yet loved you notwithstanding all; He saved you from your lost estate, His loving-kindness, oh how great!"

Why, beloved, it must be sovereign grace from top to bottom. Grace must be the Alpha, grace must be the Omega. If this is the true state of the case I do not wonder that so many kick against the doctrine of election and the kindred doctrines of grace when they have such a high opinion of themselves; but if God would make them see their own hearts then they would cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And then they would understand that if ever a man is saved, it is not by his own doing or his own willing, but by divine grace alone. It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy, for He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. The sovereignty of God would become an easy doctrine to believe if we felt the depravity of our own hearts; if we saw ourselves as in the glass of Scripture, and abhorred ourselves in dust and ashes, then instead of having any claims upon God we would say, "Let Him do as seems good to Him," and make our appeal not to His justice but to His unfathomable mercy, crying, "According to the multitude of Your loving-kindnesses and Your tender mercies blot out my iniquities."

Yet once again; it is how this doctrine illustrates the doctrine of the atonement. Christians, sin defiles us most horribly; its act defiles our character, but its essence has ruined our nature. It appears from Christ's statement that we are defiled internally as well as outwardly, that sin is not only an eruption as it were upon the skin, but it is in the center of our nature. Behold, then, the need of the precious blood and admire its wonderful potency! The blood of God's own dear Son which streamed on Calvary's accursed tree cleanses us in our inner man. O matchless blood! O marvelous purification! Come here, sinner; though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though your heart itself is even more scarlet than your actions, He can cleanse your heart as well as your life. Christ can cleanse the fountain and the stream, too; He can remove the external leprosy, and heal the internal leprosy, also; both root and branch He bears away. O souls, admire and wonder; bow down with tears streaming from your eyes, and then look up with gladness to the Son of God made flesh, crucified for sinners, for whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Come, you black-hearted! Come, you defiled and ruined sons of Adam! Come, you who are perishing at the gates of hell shut out from hope! Come, you who like the men of Zebulon and Naphtali sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. Come and trust Christ, and He will send His Spirit upon you, and give you new hearts and right spirits; from all your iniquities will He cleanse you, He will be the new Creator, for He sits on the throne this day, and He says, "Behold, I make all things new."

Oh that Jesus may make some new who are here this morning! I have laid the axe at the root of the tree; and every tree that is here must be cut down and cast into

the fire, unless Christ changes the nature of that tree, and makes it bring forth fruit unto righteousness. I have tried to show that man is utterly ruined in himself; that he has become like the ruins of Babylon where hideous dragons and all manner of loathsome creatures dwell. I will even liken him to the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, where Satan dwells as a leviathan and with him innumerable creeping things, things obscene and horrible. I have tried, as far as I could, to preach the old unfashionable truth of God, and I expect to be hated for so doing; but now over all there comes the proclamation of mercy, that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their iniquities; and whoever believes in Him shall be delivered from the mischief of the fall, and lifted to dwell where God is, in perfect purity and happiness. What a wonder is this choice mercy that a den of dragons should become a temple of the Holy Spirit! What a wonder that the heart, through which blasphemy raged, should become a soul in which divine grace reigns! That the profane mouth should become the organ of holy song! Oh what a thousand wonders, that that black heap of human nature, that dunghill of the heart, should yet be made pure as alabaster, glittering in holy light, and bright with heaven, shining like pure gold, like transparent glass; and that the Holy Spirit Himself should agree to dwell where the devil dwelt! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" What wonder! Once they were the temples of lust, of anger, of evil speaking, of blasphemy; and yet they can be, and I trust now are, the temples of the Holy Spirit. Oh marvelous! Marvelous! Let us bless God, and ask that we may realize in ourselves this wondrous miracle to the praise and glory of His grace, where He has made us accepted in the Beloved.