

THE INBRED WICKEDNESS IN EVERY ONE OF US:

"The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked...!" Jer. 17:9

By Pastor Del Wray

The natural heart of every man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! What says the Scripture? Hear the Book of Genesis:

The deceit and wickedness in every one of us! "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." The first Book of Kings: "There is no man that sins not." The Book of Psalms: "The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any who did understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are altogether become filthy: there is none that does good, no, not one." "The fool has said in his heart, there is no God. Corrupt are they, they have done abominable iniquity, there is none that does good." The Book of Job: "How can he be clean, who is born of a woman?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." The Book of Proverbs: "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" The Book of Ecclesiastes: "There is not a just man upon earth, who does good and sins not." "The heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil." "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live. The Book of Isaiah: "All we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way." "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags." The Words of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemy: these are the things which defile a man." The same words more fully in Mark: "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile a man."

O this pure heart, this good heart which people speak of! These are not texts which describe the character of the wicked only; they are written generally of all mankind, of you and me and the whole world, and they ought to be sufficient proof of that which Solomon declares, "He who trusts his own heart is a fool!"

But perhaps you would like to know what Bible history teaches us upon this point: it is possible you may flatter yourselves these are all single texts, and probably do not mean something quite as strong as I have made them appear. Be not deceived; you will find nothing to encourage you to think well of yourself; man's natural character is everywhere described in the same colors, it is all black, very black. Perhaps you sometimes try to think that the Bible is a Book which contains the history of many good men, and an account of God's loving-kindness to us, and a great store of good advice. No doubt it does contain all this but it contains something more too: it contains the true description of man's heart, it strips off the flimsy coverings which pride and self-conceit throw over our natural dispositions, and it shows us man as he really is; it furnishes continual proof from first to last of the inbred wickedness of our hearts, it supplies us with countless examples of our inclination towards sin, unless we are restrained and bent back by the grace of God.

O brothers and sisters, that you would only search the Scripture for yourselves on this matter! I am not preaching my own doctrine; I am telling you that plain, humbling truth which the Holy Spirit endeavors in every possible way to drive into our hearts, in that blessed Volume which was written for our warning.

You can hardly turn to a single part of Bible history in which this doctrine does not come uppermost. Look at the men before the flood! who would have thought, with Paradise as a witness before their eyes, for until the flood, Paradise was on earth, who would have thought they could have turned their backs on God, and given themselves up to all manner of lusts and sin? And yet they did so, in spite of every warning, and God was obliged to drown the whole world, excepting eight people.

Look at men after the flood! Doubtless you would expect that everyone would flee from sin as if it were a serpent, remembering God's wrath against iniquity; and yet, behold, the first thing that we meet with is the calling of Abraham and his family to preserve the remembrance of God upon the earth; the whole world had become so sinful and idolatrous, that the Lord Jehovah was obliged to interfere, as it were, in a special manner, and choose out one man's home, that He might not be entirely forgotten. And lest you should imagine things were not so very bad, and this calling of Abraham not so very necessary, the next event we meet with is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, because of their abominable wickedness.

Look at the history of Israel, the chosen family itself. They went down into Egypt and dwelt there, and two hundred years after they had gone back so far in spiritual

things that they had forgotten the name of the God of their fathers. They were brought out by miracles with a mighty hand, and yet they had hardly got into the wilderness when they murmured and desired to return to Egypt. They were taken into the land of Canaan, and had the purest and the best of laws given to them, and yet Joshua was scarcely buried when they fell away after idols! Time after time you read of their being in hard captivity for their sins, time after time you read of God delivering them; and yet a few short years and it seems to have been all forgotten. The Lord gave them judges and kings, and priests and prophets and ministers, and preaching's and warnings; and yet their history, with a few exceptions, is a history of unbelief, and backsliding, and transgression, and crime down to the very day when they crucified the Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

What can you say to these things? If ever there was a nation free from outward temptation and inducement to sin, it was the Jews; they were hedged in and fenced in on every side by the strictest rules, which prevented them mixing with other nations and nevertheless you see what they were. You can only account for it by taking the Bible reason: they had the root of all the evil within them, they were men like ourselves and as such, they had hearts deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; and like too many among ourselves they would not believe it and so they fell.

But I shall not leave the Bible here. I say further that you can hardly turn to a single family, even of the best of God's servants, in which the natural corruption of our hearts does not appear more or less in someone of the branches. The firstborn in Adam's house was Cain, a murderer. The family of Noah, that just man, contained Ham, the wicked father of Canaan, the accursed race. Abraham was the father of Midian, an idolatrous people who deceived Israel in the wilderness. Isaac was the father of Esau, that "profane person." Jacob was the father of Reuben, who defiled his father's bed. Eli, the priest of the Lord, was the father of Hophni and Phinehas, who made people abhor the offering of God. David, the man after God's own heart, was the father of immoral Absalom and Amnon. Hezekiah, that good man, was the father of Manasseh; the most wicked of the kings of Judah.

Why am I telling you these things? I tell you them to show you that good education and good example alone, cannot make our children godly, without the grace of God; and to show you how deeply rooted is the corruption of our natural dispositions!

But I shall go even further. I say that you can hardly turn to a single character, among the holy men described in the Bible, who did not, to his own horror and

dismay, fall at one time or another. Noah planted a vineyard and was one day found drunken. David committed adultery with the wife of Uriah. Peter denied his Lord thrice. What does this prove? It proves beyond a question that the most excellent of the earth have found that the root of all their sinfulness is within them; they never boasted of the purity or goodness of their hearts, they have all placed upon record the truth that, although Satan does much and the world does much, still after all the great enemy is always within us! It is a heart deceitful above all things and desperately wicked! Pause, people, for an instant, and think of that: the men who were the friends of God, who lived most closely to Him, were those whom we find grieving and mourning over their sinful hearts most bitterly. Surely the heart must be more treacherous than you suppose!

Well, perhaps you will say, all this may be very true; the men we read of in the Bible certainly sinned very much; but things are altered now, we live under the light of the Gospel. Things may be altered certainly in some respects but the heart is just the same. I cannot see the smallest proof of any change there. So long as every newspaper contains accounts of crime in one shape or another of all descriptions; so long as jails and prisons are full and new ones are continually being built; so long as hundreds and thousands are every year tried and punished, and yet next year there are as many more committed; so long as men make an idol of money, and swear and ask God to damn their souls, and break the Sabbath day in every possible manner, and show an utter lack of affection and kindness to their own relations, and are angry and passionate on the slightest occasion, and think very lightly about immorality, and think it clever and fair to deceive their neighbors, and do not hesitate to say what is not true if it serves their interest, and covet each other's money and house and land and property from morning until night, and get drunk, as if they gloried in ruining soul and body at once, so long, I say, as such things go on in America, which professes to be a Christian country and you know they do go on, so long as such things go on in the face of God who sees it all, and the Bible which condemns it all, and the Church which witnesses against it all; so long shall I as a Baptist preacher declare that the only possible reason which can be given for it is the plain account of my text:

"The natural heart of every man is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked!"

There must be some hidden cause and fountain of sin within us or men would never be guilty of such enormous wickedness!

I shudder to think that the majority of those in our churches today are not saved and those seeking to be saved live under a great hindrance of sorry preachers who don't know their own hearts, unable to experience the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives because of the blinding ignorance of their own depraved natures. O God help us!