

22 THE HEART OF MAN

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

Ezekiel 36:26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

Jeremiah had some revealing things to say about the depravity of the heart of man in his unregenerate state.

- **A Sinful Heart (Jeremiah 17:1)**

The primary condition of the unsaved is one of sin. In this verse, sin as a nature and principle is vividly described as being *“written with a pen of iron; with the point of a diamond it is engraved on the tablet of their heart”*. As Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple, the fundamental need of every man is first to *“know the plague of his own heart” (1 Kings 8:38)*. Man needs a real revelation and conviction by the Holy Spirit of his own sin before he will repent and be saved.

- **A Departing Heart (Jeremiah 17:5)**

“Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD”. It is the nature of the human heart to go astray and depart from God. *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one, to his own way” (Isaiah 53:6)* is how Isaiah pointedly put it. A man needs to be sick of his runaway heart and long for home. He needs to stop all his aimless wandering and start looking for God and be found.

- **A Deceitful Heart (Jeremiah 17:9)**

The unregenerate heart is constantly *“deceiving and being deceived” (2 Timothy 3:13)*. He cannot trust even himself for he does not see things as they truly are in God’s sight. Until a man is awakened to the deceitfulness of his own heart, he will continue to put his trust in himself and not God.

- **A Wicked Heart (Jeremiah 17:9)**

This verse describes man’s heart as not just wicked, but desperately wicked (or beyond cure in the NIV). Wickedness is simply the absence of goodness or uprightness. One need not exhibit extreme wickedness of behaviour to qualify for this description. To the enquirer who addressed Him as ‘Good Teacher’ Jesus replied *“Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God” (Mark 10:18)*. Unless God gives us a new heart through Jesus Christ, we remain incurably and desperately wicked in His sight.

- **An Evil Heart (Jeremiah 18:12)**

“So we will walk according to our own plans, and we will every one obey the dictates of his own evil heart”. Evil is somewhat similar to wickedness. But evil in the Bible is particularly related to stubbornness and a refusal to believe, a hardness of heart, such as *“an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” (Hebrews 3:12)*. The essence of an evil heart is unbelief. When Satan first sowed the seed of sin in man’s heart, it was of unbelief in what God had said. To those who would turn to God from their unbelief, He *“will put a new spirit within them, and take the stony heart out of their flesh” (Ezekiel 11:19)*.

This is the glory and wonder of a new heart and a new spirit that come with the new birth when a man is made a new creation in Jesus Christ.