

How's your Heart?

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[0 : 00] Jeremiah 17, verse 5. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is.

For he shall be, as a tree, planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart. I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

If I had to put a title on this message today, I would say, how's your heart? How's your heart? Let's take a look at the heart. And we see in Jeremiah 17, verse 9.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know it? Now, just a couple of days ago, I was bouncing one of my grandchildren on my knee, and she, my granddaughter, was talking with me, and then the little dog bounded up and jumped on her lap.

[1 : 49] And so, then she said, oh, there's two things on your knees now. There's two things on your lap now. And I said, yeah, there's a human being, and there's an animal. And then she said, oh, we're both animals.

And I said, no. It's a human being and an animal. They're very different. And really, it's the heart, isn't it? I could have gone on to say, we're body, soul, and spirit.

An animal doesn't have the spirit. An animal doesn't have this kind of heart that can be convicted and can be led and can receive of God and can be changed within.

An animal doesn't know that. And yet, the world that we're living in would say, you're just an animal. So, just go and fulfil your animal instinct. You know, you're just an animal. Just be like an animal. Act like an animal. And you see, the goings-on, many do just that, don't they? They act like animals. You know, they're just no thought. And if we were just as an animal, then, you know, better watch it when you go out that door that you don't step on an ant.

[2 : 56] Because then an ant is of the same value as a man, as a woman. And of course, we know that's not so. We've been specially designed, made in God's image and likeness, that we have that special God zone within us, if you like, that only God can fill a human being and not an animal, which we know is much different.

And so, when we look at the man, there is a heart in us. There is a soul. There is a spirit. And we're looking at that feature of the heart. And when I say heart here, I mean your character, your personality, your reason, your will.

How is your heart? Your heart is you. It's how you think. It's who you are. And the Word of God talks a lot about the heart. And so it's important that we, each of us, personally, take a good look within, at a heart, and see what shape it is in.

Basically, there's two kinds of hearts. There's the cursed heart and the blessed heart. The cursed heart. Verse 5. Verse 5 talks about the heart.

One whose heart departeth from the Lord. There's a heart that departs from the Lord. A cursed heart. It's a man who is cursed, unstable.

[4 : 17] It refers there to that it cursed be the man that trusteth in man, whose heart departeth from the Lord. He should be like the heath in the desert. Now, if you've seen heath in the desert, now I know our old family name was alike to the word heath.

That I've been, I've got a new name written down. Because my surname wasn't Craig when I was born. It was, I was changed to Craig.

Because our surname used to be Hoth. And my dad had the wisdom to change that name. Because no one knew how to spell Hoth. It's easy really. It's heath with that with an O instead of an E.

So this word Hoth means heath. And this word heath is like a, it says here, like the heath in the desert. I don't want to be like that. Amen. I don't want to be like a bramble bush blowing along with the wind.

Just a worthless piece of dry, lifeless grass in a bundle. That's the picture of the cursed man. Living in the parched places, in the wilderness.

[5 : 21] You know, you see in those western movies where the, the, the bramble bush blows down the, the street in the old western movies. That's the kind of, yeah, it's humbleweed. That's the kind of picture here of the cursed heart.

Like a dry old piece of bush in the desert, blown along by the wind. Empty, lifeless. This is the lost man. The lost heart. What a picture of barrenness, of emptiness, of dryness, cursed, unstable, dead, lifeless.

The lost heart, the cursed heart. Then we see in contrast, the blessed heart. Verse seven, the blessed man, the one who puts his trust in the Lord.

Here's a life with a capital L, filled with and overflowing with hope, with direction, with meaning, with real life. The life lived to the full.

Here's the blessed man, the saved man, the heart saved. A life filled with God's richness, with God's fullness, with God's spirit.

[6 : 28] And this life we see, he's likened to a tree, firmly planted, nourished and vibrant, fresh and fruitful. Now, folk might know, we've got some areas in our garden, where we've been planting some trees lately, to green up what was a dead, dry, empty space.

And so I've been learning a bit about planting trees lately. And, the word of God tells us, where to be planted. For our leaf to be green, to not be full of care in the year of drought, to be not ceasing from yielding fruit, we are to be planted by the waters, verse eight.

Planted by the waters, planted where that nourishment is, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river. And so, when the heat comes, her leaf shall be green.

That's the picture of the Christian, who has that real life, the God life, firmly planted and nourished, like a vibrant, fresh, fruitful tree.

So what a contrast that is. You've got the heath, this bramble bush, this tumbleweed, or you've got the tree, firmly planted, roots going down deep, holding them firm, nourished, vibrant, vibrant, fresh and fruitful.

[7 : 45] The cursed heart, the blessed heart, very different. The word of God tells us about this kind of heart trouble that is in us, it's in all of us. Verse nine, that Jeremiah shows how the heart of a man is deceitful and wicked.

It's a really hopeless, desperate condition. This is the heart of the man who is lost, without Christ. The very core of his being is ruined by sin, darkened and diseased by sin within.

And in verse 10, we see that the Lord searches the heart. He examines the heart condition. Only the Almighty can see our heart's true condition and will treat us accordingly, as we see in verse 10.

I, the Lord, search the heart. He searches the heart with his x-ray vision. He tries the reins. He searches deep within. So the very cords and make-up of who we are, the fibre of our very being.

And he searches that. And the good news is that there is hope for the heart that is darkened by sin. There is cleansing made possible by the precious blood of Jesus from the stains of sin and of guilt.

[8 : 56] And David cried out for this, this complete cleansing within. In Psalm 51 verse 10. And he received that cleansing. In Psalm 51 verse 10, as it's been popularised in song, Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

What a prayer. And his prayer was answered. That clean heart, of course the context here of how he fell in a blatant, vile, degrading sin.

And yet, he cried out, Create in me a clean heart. Renew a right spirit within me. And God granted him that prayer. And we see, through David's life, furthermore, the evidence of that changed heart.

In Psalm 57 verse 7, he says, My heart is fixed. O God, my heart is fixed. I will sing and give praise. We see the result of this change in Psalm 84 verse 2.

My soul longeth, Yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. He says, My soul longs, my heart cries, I'm fainting for the courts of the Lord.

[10 : 08] He wanted to be amongst the gathering of the people of God. He wanted to be amongst the children of God when they gathered at the courts of the temple. And he says, My heart and my flesh, they cry out for the living God.

There's this something deep, deep down within. Because God had fixed his heart. He had fixed David's heart. He'd settled it, transformed it, renewed it, remade it, given it that new meaning and that new purpose.

The heart of David speaks to us today. The heart of such a man. You know, when we see at times there's this very loud voice against Christians, isn't there?

Where someone, especially when a Christian falls into sin, that they're discounted and people consider that they're a waste, waste of space.

You know, they consider when a Christian falls sometimes people give up on them. But yet, we can't fall too far away from God that we cannot pray as David prayed and know God's forgiveness and know God's grace, even then.

[11:19] And the heart of David was especially in accord with God's own heart as Paul described him in Acts 13.22. Paul speaks here and he tells how Acts 13.22 when he had removed him Saul, it says, He, God, raised up unto them David to be their king to whom also he gave testimony and said, I have found David, the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart which shall fulfil all my will.

David, a man after mine own heart. David, even David, as much as he fell and fouled up and really degraded his testimony to such a vile degree that yet God counted him a man after mine own heart. He saw that that there was still that receptivity to his spirit and that he could be changed and remade and renewed. And so there's hope for all of us that even whatever our state and standing, even if we might be one that departs from the Lord as Jeremiah 17.5 that even there is still hope. There is still hope while we have life. There is still hope that we can repent and turn to Christ. Not that we should do despite and be careless with our Christian walk.

We should seek to walk wisely with our God. But friends, there's comfort there for all of us that God's grace is sufficient.

[12:58] and no one knows your heart like Jesus. He sees the longing, he sees the loneliness, the hardness, the hurting times and he changes our hearts.

He changes people, he gives us a different heart, a changed heart, a new heart and God can make our heart tender towards him, compassionate and caring. The Bible speaks of such a tenderness of heart.

We see at one time there was a couple of evangelists long ago and they went to the New York City to see the night life. They wanted to just check the city out to see the spiritual condition of the city. I know some folk have been down witnessing at Hindley Street and other places and sometimes it's quite a shocking sight what you actually do see at times, especially in the late hours of the night and you see the night life.

Really, it's night death because of their dead people walking around. They are lost in sin, they're dead towards God. We see that this couple of evangelists, they went down to New York City and one of them was a director of a street mission and they went to bars and houses of ill repute.

[14:14] They went past these various places and at 2am one of them was sickened and he asked to leave. And this other man also was so upset.

That he leaned against a lamppost while crying, Oh God, Oh God, the sin of this city is breaking my heart. Oh God. That was the deep prayer within that it prompted him as he saw this sight, as he saw the damned all around him, the lost, the hopeless, the cursed, like a bramble bush, like that tumbleweed blowing across the desert sands.

He saw the cursed hearts, the lost, that their heart was so deceived, so hardened, so godless, and yet they could scarcely see their condition.

And of course we see times when the Lord Jesus, his heart was moved as he beheld the city and he wept over it. There was a compassion. As he looked, his heart was moved. So there is need for that tenderness of heart and that we too, as God's own people, that we as prospective soul winners should have a heart for souls.

We should have a heart that has a tenderness towards God and a heart not to necessarily condemn, certainly not to condemn the lost, but a heart that is yearning that they be saved.

[15:40] The Bible speaks of a brokenness of heart and truly he was sent to heal the broken hearted. Luke 4 verse 18 where our Lord says, the spirit of the Lord is upon me because he had anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor.

He had sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. This is Luke 4 verse 18.

It's interesting that some Bibles sadly omit to heal the broken hearted. I put to you that's a very important part of our Lord's mission.

The overwhelming need is all around us. Broken hearted people, people lost, the cursed hearts, the bramble bush, tumbleweed kind of heath in the desert hearts, dry, dead, dusty branches blowing along.

They need Christ. And the overwhelming need is all around us, brothers and sisters. There was another man who was joining some Christian workers in the urban slums of Calcutta.

[16:52] And this man was looking at the site before him and he saw the staggering poverty and the suffering and it overwhelmed him. And he was teaming up with another man who was more familiar with these surroundings and the host who was this more man who was accustomed to this part of Calcutta, he said to the visitor, don't worry, in a few days you'll get used to it.

The Christian preacher said that is exactly what I do not want to do. I want to stay soft and weep over the hardship I see here.

Now it's pretty confronting such things. I know as a young man I had occasion where it was just a stopover, a stopover here and there and one stopover that we had in our journeys back to the homeland, the Pommeland, was the land of Hong Kong.

And I remember joining my mum and dad and just going down some little wooden pathway amongst these rickety old ships and little vessels and cabins built out of all kinds of rubbish and seeing that and just as a young man just in those couple of days or so that we were at that place that really it was very confronting for me as a young man to see that and to see these beggars coming up little boys and girls coming begging and dressed in rags and you can think well we live in such a privileged world don't we and yet we can get used to it we can get used to it and the needs are all around us when we see the streets of Elizabeth we see the people all around us that are crying out that are living in godlessness and hopelessness and how we need to stay soft to the hardness that are in some people's lives and the question is is our heart right with god is it softened by god are we able to care to reach out or do we just think of ourselves and give no thought to such things when we're living in the comforts of Australia and we're living in these days of crisis and disorder all around the world where there's hatred and moral breakdown when we see the real answers for our world is christ he is the answer not some climate change or some other government initiative or program or throwing money at this or that it's not that all the huge problems of our world in terms of crime and drugs despair and lawlessness the answer is not found in more institutions in more prisons to lock people up in more programs to try to recondition their minds the answer is a changed heart the answer is christ that's the answer for our world and that's the answer that we have on our lips the answer for the reason the hope that is in us and so as someone has put it here there is a god who sets standards for right and wrong there is such a thing as absolute truth despite the fact that everyone it seems is saying that truth is what you find it to be and this quote goes on most educational institutions are teaching that today that truth is relative no there is absolute truth and there is hope there is something more important for man to live for than just personal pleasure and that something is to know love and worship the god who created us then we have got to be able to take that gospel that good news that the lord jesus died on the cross that our sins might be forgiven into the places where people are hurting and suffering there is one thing that man cannot fix the heart the only way the heart is fixed is when the righteousness of god comes into our lives end quote and that's the answer for our world today is christ living in hearts by faith and god can come into that doorway of the heart by faith he can change people from the inside out he can remove the evils within the selfishness the pride the lust the anger the hate christ is in that heart changing business still and he offers peace and hope and fulfilment within the changed heart that's the gospel truth that is still real and happening today you know i was blessed this morning when one of the

youngsters this young boy 12 years old said i want to become a christian after the service this morning what a blessing that was it just made the whole day worthwhile just to that youngster that 12 year old and i kept questioning him you sure you you know i didn't want him to just because his mum was kind of saying oh he wants to but no he was very he was dead set sure that he was certain that he wanted to know how to become a christian so thank god i was able to help him in that in that this morning and i trust that he has truly trusted christ and that's the changed heart the changed heart that's what makes you want to get out of bed in the morning doesn't it and get into ministry of different kinds whatever it be to let the lord use you and that ministry can be your

personal witness your rubbing shoulders with people here and there the changed heart is the gospel truth that is still real today happening today and the good news is that the cursed heart can be a changed heart amen the cursed heart that dry bush blowing along can be changed into a blessed heart we can be a heart transformed by the power of god someone has said this it's still one of the most amazing medical procedures ever developed actually taking the heart of one person who has just died and shortly thereafter transplanting it into another person whose heart is failing and today over 2,000 of these heart transplants are performed every year in the united states now this is an old quote so it's probably more more than that now but the first one took place in 1967 actually in south africa at a time when the country was racially divided by the system called apartheid where they would keep colored people away from non-colored people and the heart of a black accident victim was transplanted into the body of a sickly 59 year old man who happened to be white and christian barnard the heart surgeon who carried out this breakthrough operation would go down in the pages of medical history with the giants and now while medical history records that the first heart transplant was performed by dr barnard in the 1960s real heart transplants were actually pioneered millennia ago by the master heart surgeon and this miraculous procedure is more life changing than any medical procedure could be because god is in the heart transplant business isn't he we see in ezekiel 11 verses 19 through 20 where it tells us of this work of god and he says i will give them one heart and i'll put a new spirit within you and i will take the stony heart out of their flesh you know that hard stony rock hard resistant hardened heart it says i'll take that out of their flesh and i'll give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances and do them and they shall be my people and i will be their god that's what god does isn't it now there's different views about heart transplants whether it's rightful or wrongful that's a kind of immaterial but the question is that god can take away our hard heart that cursed heart and replace it with a blessed heart we can have a new heart and that heart transplant that heart transplant miracle is not cheap it was paid for by the lord jesus at the cross as he took in his death all our shame and guilt every sin we've ever done or will do and when we open that sin hurt sin hardened heart to

[25 : 58] him he comes in with his awesome love he forgives and redirects us and changes us from the inside out and if you've never opened your heart to the one person who can give you a new beginning you could tell him that you want to belong to him right now right where you are and this is hope this is eternal life and when you as it were let dr jesus give you that miracle of a new heart that's when new life begins and the good news is that the lord jesus comes alive in our heart there was a surgeon who sat beside a boy's bed and the boy's parents sat across from him and the surgeon said tomorrow morning i'll open up your heart the boy said you'll find jesus there the surgeon looked up he was annoyed i'll cut your heart open he continued to see how much damage has been done but when you open up my heart you'll find jesus in there the surgeon looked to the parents who sat quietly when i see how much damage has been done i'll sew your heart and chest back up and i'll plan what to do next but you'll find jesus in my heart the bible says he lives there the hymns all say he lives there you'll find him in my heart the surgeon had had enough i'll tell you what i'll find in your heart i'll find damaged muscle low blood supply and weakened vessels and i'll find out if i can make you well you'll find jesus there too he lives there the surgeon left and the surgeon sat in his office recording his notes from the surgery damaged aorta damaged pulmonary vein widespread muscle degeneration no hope for transplant no hope for cure therapy painkillers and bed rest prognosis here he paused death within one year he stopped the recorder but there was more to be said why he asked aloud why did you do this you put him here you put him here in this pain and you've cursed him to an early death why the lord answered and said the boy my lamb was not meant for your flock for long for he is a part of my flock and will forever be here in my flock he will feel no pain and will be comforted as you cannot imagine and his parents will one day join him here and they will know peace and my flock will continue to grow the surgeon's tears were hot but his anger was hotter you created that boy and you created that heart he'll be dead in months why the lord answered the boy my lamb shall return to my flock for he has done his duty i did not put my lamb with your flock to lose him but to retrieve another lost lamb and the surgeon wept later as the surgeon sat beside the boy's bed the boy's parents sat across from him the boy awoke and whispered did you cut open my heart yes said the surgeon what did you find asked the boy i found jesus there said the surgeon amen you know that's what a blessed story that is that truly that boy's testimony spoke to that man and friends there's the blessing of a changed heart that jesus can come and i know some might overuse the phrase that jesus comes and lives in our heart but it's

true the word tells us in ephesians 3 17 that christ may dwell in your hearts by faith that christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ephesians 3 17 that's the changed heart because the changed heart is a christ-filled heart that christ does come and he dwells there within he takes up permanent residence he resides there it becomes his permanent dwelling place in the heart by faith the holy heaven and the holy heart are his two abodes and so we

see another truth is a kept heart a kept heart that there's a needful response by us in proverbs 4 23 it says keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life proverbs 4 23 keep thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life keep your heart keep your heart right keep short accounts with people keep things right keep that heart right with god and man guard your heart watch where you go what you join in what you partake of that you keep your heart right guard your heart bible tells us of this to the importance of guarding our thoughts of making wise choices of watching our feelings what we're torn to what tugs at our heartstrings and pauses in different directions that we watch our feelings our motives our choices because they can affect the whole of our life christ lives in hearts by faith and just to close one final thought that we can have a god-seeking heart a god-seeking heart of course we know the scriptures that say no man seeks after god but there is the call in jeremiah 29 13 where it says the lord says and you shall seek me and find me when you shall search for me with all your heart you shall find me you shall seek me you shall find me when you shall search for me with all your heart let's have that heart that is a god-seeking heart that we seek after the things of god we seek after the things above we seek after that which would please him and honor him and uplift him and exalt him that that is what makes us tick that that is that motive that overarching desire that earnest seeking after god and searching for him and not half-heartedly but with our whole heart with all your heart and this you know there's so many scriptures scriptures that have this theme of of these truths and it would be wise endeavor to to search the scriptures for these words of the heart of of searching after god of of that longing of that affection of things above that that we can be as it were tuned up in accordance with god that that tuning fork if you like that wavelength of god that will tune into that that will have a heart as david had a heart after god's own heart now that's amazing isn't it that we would have a heart like the love of jesus that a heart after god's own heart how can we have a heart like that because he puts it in us he puts his heart within us so to close friends the one whose heart departs from the lord is like a heath in the desert inhabiting the parched places but blessed is the man that trusted in the lord and whose hope the lord is for he should be as a tree planted by the waters and that spreadeth out of roots by the river shall not see when heat cometh but her leaf shall be green and shall not be careful in the year of drought neither shall cease from yielding fruit the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it i the lord search the heart i try the reins even to give every man according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings let us pray lord we thank you that you are the great physician

that you take hearts stony and hard and you take them out and replace them with a heart after your own heart lord help us to be a god searching people that will be in tune with you we pray if there's any yet to trust you even in the hearing of this message that they might know what it is to have a heart renewed remade a new spirit a new heart planted within that we can know christ dwelling in our hearts by faith as we trust the work that you've done at the cross in dying on the cross and rising for our justification lord that we can know that saving grace of god that we can even be changed such that our heart is a heart that is shaped just like your heart lord jesus and that we can know a new mind a new heart a new motive a new mindset that you can so transform us that you can take take us in a total new direction in a new way of living well we pray for anyone here tonight that we can all know that assurance that christ dwells permanently resides in our heart by faith as we put our trust in you we know we can be planted strongly like a tree very firmly planted and bringing fruits and green leaves living that vibrant life lord because we know that we more than just when we're much much more than an animal we are made in the image and likeness of the very creator god and you've made us that we might find our peace in you thank you lord for all these things in jesus name amen