

PM Psalm 51 & Jeremiah 17:9-10 A Bad Heart

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[0 : 0 0] Well, let us turn in our Bibles to two readings. We're going to read, first of all, from Psalm 51, and then some verses from Jeremiah chapter 17.

So, first of all, Psalm 51, which you will find on page 568 of the Pew Bible. 5, 6, 8. And we'll read this psalm together.

To the choir master, a psalm of David, when Nathan, the prophet, went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions.

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.

[1 : 1 6] Against you, you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment.

Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean. Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness.

Let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

[2 : 3 3] Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. Deliver me from blood guiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it.

You will not be pleased with a burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Do good to Zion in your good pleasure. Build up the walls of Jerusalem. Then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings, and whole burnt offerings.

Then bulls will be offered on your altar. And then, turning over to the prophecy of Jeremiah, and chapter 17, verses 9 and 10, you'll find this on page 781 of the Pew Bible.

[3 : 5 6] The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick.

Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

May God bless these readings from his word to us all. Turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 17, and we're going to take as our text this evening, the words of verses 9 and 10.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick. Who can understand it? I, the Lord, search the heart, and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds.

The first of these two verses contains a very strong saying, and one which the world in general refuses to accept.

[5 : 25] The Bible here says that the heart is deceitful above all things. The man of the world would say something like this in response, I don't agree with that statement.

Yes, my heart might be careless and thoughtless, but basically my heart is an honest heart. But our text says, the heart is desperately sick.

And no, it isn't, says the sinner. Okay, yes, I know that I don't pray, or read the Bible, or go to church, and I admit that I don't live as I should.

But I'm sure that I have a good heart when all is said and done. But our text goes on to ask, who can understand the heart?

Who can understand it? Understand it, exclaims the man of the world. Okay, I freely admit that I don't pretend to be a saint, a Christian, but surely I know my own heart.

[6 : 51] And I know what my own faults are. And so here, dear friends, there are two great statements that stand opposed to one another.

Both of these statements cannot be true. Both of these positions cannot be true. One of them must be false. We have the Bible on the one side, and we have flesh and blood on the other.

God says one thing in his word, and the man of the world says another. Who is right? Who is telling the truth?

Now what I want to do in the sermon this evening is to convince you, to persuade you, that the Bible's position on the heart of man is right, it's correct, and it's true.

And I pray that the Holy Spirit may bring all of us to a correct understanding of our own hearts. Because it is impossible to say just how important it is that we all have a clear view and understanding of the natural state of our own hearts.

[8 : 23] The heart, according to the Bible, is such an important part of man. Think of some of the verses that we read of in the Bible that speak about the heart and show us the importance of the heart.

Think of Romans 10, verse 10. Many of us learned these words as children. For with the heart one believes and is justified.

How vitally important is the heart? With the heart one believes and is justified. Or think of Proverbs 4, verse 23.

From the heart flow the springs of life. Out of the heart are the issues of life. This is why we're told to guard our hearts because the issues of life, the springs of life flow out of the heart.

Or think of the words of 1 Samuel 16, verse 7. The prophet Samuel is told by God such an important lesson. man looks upon the outward appearance but the Lord looks on the heart.

[9 : 41] The Lord sees into the heart. My friends, unless you really know the character of your heart, you will never value the gospel as you should.

And you will never love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. And you will never see how absolutely necessary it was that the Lord Jesus Christ should suffer death on the cross to deliver our souls from hell and to bring us to God.

You will never see these things unless you grasp the true nature of your own heart. It is only when we see ourselves as we really are in the sight of God that the things of the gospel become precious to us because we know that we need to be saved from ourselves.

Three things I want to look at with you in the sermon this evening. The first thing is this. I want to try to prove to you from the scriptures the truth of the words.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick. The second thing I want to do is to remind you that God knows what is within you.

[11 : 14] Our text says I the Lord search the heart and test the mind. And then in the third place I want to close by pointing you to the only remedy for your bad heart that can do you any good if you are to be saved from yourself.

You might ask me and it's good that I ask myself this why am I standing here in this pulpit in this church with an open Bible preaching on such a subject.

Why am I doing that? What's the purpose of it? I'm doing it because I want every single one of us to come to Jesus Christ the Savior and to be rescued from the wrath to come.

we're dealing with very important vital issues. Life is at stake we need to understand our condition in order that we might flee to the remedy and to take that remedy that is on offer to us.

someone has said and I think this is as good a place as any to say it the heart of your problem is the problem of your heart.

[12 : 51] You have a bad heart. and I want to try to demonstrate that from the scriptures the sinfulness of the human heart proved from scripture.

So let me begin by demonstrating to you the natural deceit and wickedness of every man woman and child that has been born into this world.

And I want us in the first place to look at what the scriptures have to say on this subject. What does God teach us about the human heart in his book?

Well let's look at some of these key verses in scripture. If you want to turn over to Genesis chapter 6 and verse 5 you'll read these words.

God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth. And listen to these words. And that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[14 : 05] What an indictment that is on the human heart coming from the very mouth of God. That every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

way. And then if you jump a couple of chapters to chapter 8 of Genesis and verse 21 a similar thing is said. The intention of man's heart is evil from his youth.

death. Jump a few books of the Bible to 1 Kings chapter 8 and verse 46 and we read these words.

There is no one who does not sin. sin. The universality of sin. It passes across the whole of the human race.

It has affected the whole of the human race descended from Adam. There is no one not one who does not sin. Then if we jump into the book of Psalms think of Psalm 14 in verses 2 and 3.

[15 : 19] The Lord looks down from heaven we read on the children of man to see if there are any who understand who seek after God.

And what does God find when he looks down from heaven upon the sons of man? They have all turned aside. Together they have become corrupt.

There is none who does good. Not even one. The same psalm.

Psalms 14 verse 1 the famous words at the beginning of the psalm. The fool says in his heart there is no God. And God says they are corrupt.

They do abominable deeds. There is no one who does good. God. If we jump back a book into the book of Job chapter 25 verse 4 we read this question.

[16 : 28] How can he who is born of woman be pure? And Job 14 verse 4 asks another question.

who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? There is not one. Then in the book of Proverbs chapter 20 verse 9 who can say I have made my heart pure.

I am clean from my sin. And the expected answer of course is no one can say such a thing. because no one of themselves can fix this heart condition.

In the book of Ecclesiastes with three verses to look at chapter 7 verse 20 where it says surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Chapter 8 verse 11 the heart of the children of man is fully set to do evil. Chapter 9 verse 3 the hearts of the children of man are full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live.

[17 : 59] If you turn to the prophecy of Isaiah we have got some great verses that are familiar to you I am sure. Like Isaiah 53 verse 6 which says all we like sheep have gone astray we have turned everyone to his own way.

Again the universality of this problem it has affected every heart of every human being. We all like sheep have gone astray and we have turned everyone done to his own way.

And then Isaiah 64 verse 6 speaks about the uncleanness of our fallen condition. We have all become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.

and then when we come into the New Testament we find the words that Jesus spoke recorded in Matthew's gospel chapter 15 verse 19 uncovers even more clearly our fallen sinful heart condition.

Jesus says Matthew 15 verse 19 for out of the heart come evil thoughts murder adultery sexual immorality theft false witness slander these are what defile a person.

[19 : 37] Where do they come from? The human heart. And the same words more fully are found in Mark's gospel chapter 7 verse 21 where Jesus is recorded as saying from within out of the heart of man come evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality envy slander pride foolishness all these evils come from within and they defile a person.

so we put all these things together and we ask where is this pure heart this good heart this basically honest heart which people talk about and let me remind you that these verses and the truth that they contain are texts that do not describe the character of the wicked person only these texts are written about mankind in general in general they are written about you and they're written about me they're written about the whole world and they ought to be sufficient proof of that which Solomon declares in Proverbs 28 verse 26 whoever trusts in his own mind literally in his own heart is a fool now it would be good if we also consulted the testimony of Bible history and brought that in as a witness for the prosecution because not only do we find these texts scattered throughout the scriptures that focus our attention on the condition of the human heart we also have the record contained in scripture of what people actually were like what they did and it's almost impossible to turn to any part of the Bible and not see this teaching illustrated in the events of

Bible history sin appears in all its ugly colours think of the people who lived in the world before the flood who would have thought that with the memory of paradise the garden of Eden still fresh in their consciousness that they could have turned their backs on God and given themselves up to all manner of lusts and sin and yet that's what they did in spite of every warning and God was obliged to drown the whole world and to destroy it except for eight people and then look at the people who lived after the flood surely you would expect that everyone would turn from sin when they remembered God's wrath against iniquity and yet the first thing that we read about after the flood is the calling of

Abraham and his family why was Abraham and his family separated out from the rest of the families of the world in those days it was because God wanted to preserve the remembrance of his name in the earth the whole world had become so sinful and idolatrous that the Lord was obliged as it were to come down in a special way and to choose one man's family that God might not be entirely forgotten by the human race and just in case you imagine things were not quite so bad and that this calling of Abraham was not so very necessary the next event in the Bible's history that we meet with is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah because of their outrageous wickedness but let's also look into the history of Israel remember

Israel was the chosen people the chosen family itself Israel as a nation went down into Egypt and dwelt there and 200 years later they had backslidden so far in spiritual things that they had forgotten the name of the God of their fathers they didn't know God's name as Jehovah as Yahweh they had lost that knowledge and then they were brought out of Egypt by miracles and by a mighty hand and yet they were no sooner in the wilderness than they grumbled against God and his servant Moses and even desired to return to the house of bondage in Egypt and then they were taken into the land of Canaan they had the purest and the best of laws given to them and yet no sooner was Joshua led in his grave than they turned away after idols and forsook the Lord and when you read the book of Judges what do you find time and again we read of the children of

[25 : 49] Israel being taken captive because of their sins and time after time you read of God coming and delivering them from their captivity and yet a few short years later it seems that all has been forgotten and they repeat the cycle again and again and again the Lord gave them judges and kings and priests and prophets and sermons and warnings and yet their history with a few exceptions is one long story of unbelief and backsliding and transgression and rebellion right down through the centuries to the very day when this nation the people of God crucified the Lord of glory himself now what can we say in response to these things that we find in scripture well if ever there was a nation free from outward temptation free from the inducement to sin surely it was the

Jewish nation they were hedged in on every side with the strictest of rules and laws which prevented their mixing with the other idolatrous nations and yet we see what they were in the pages of Bible history and I believe that there's only one explanation for this they had the root of evil within them they were people just like ourselves and as such they had hearts in the words of Jeremiah that were deceitful above all things and desperately sick but let me add further weight to the evidence from the Bible's historical record you can hardly turn to a single family even the families of the best of God's servants in which the natural corruption of the human heart does not appear in some form or another in some point of the story the first born of

Adam was Cain and he was a murderer the family of Noah Noah that just man contained not just Shem and Japheth but Ham the wicked father of Canaan the cursed race Abraham was the father of Midian as well as of Isaac who was Midian an idolatrous people who deceived Israel in the wilderness and led them into sin and to God's judgment Isaac was the father of Esau Esau is referred to as that unholy or profane person Jacob was the father of Reuben what's he famous for he was the son who defiled his father's bed

Eli the priest of the Lord was the father of Hophni and Phinehas two sons who served as priests and were so wicked that they made the people detest the sacrifices of God's worship David was the father not only of the great king Solomon but also of Absalom and Amnon two very wicked sons Hezekiah that good man was the father of Manasseh and Manasseh was perhaps the most wicked of all the kings of Judah now why do I mention these instances in the Bible's history in order to show us that being born in a good family having good examples and role models having a good education on their own cannot make the children of believers good without the grace of God and also it is to show you just how deep rooted the corruption of our natural condition truly is but I need to go one step further on this point let me bring before you some of the holy men of the

Bible because it is really a sad thing to have to stand here and to remind you of how most of these excellent men fell at one time or another I'll mention three Noah remember that after the flood he planted a vineyard and he got drunk on the wine that he produced or think of David we've read and sung from Psalm 51 this great servant of God a king after God's own heart and yet you remember how he committed adultery with Bathsheba who was the wife of Uriah and then sought Uriah's death in order to cover up and hide his sin think think of the apostle

[31 : 49] Peter and how he denied his Lord Jesus Christ three times in just one night and what do these things prove surely it proves beyond question that the most excellent of the men of our human race have found that the root of all their sinfulness isn't external out there somewhere it's inside the root of their sinfulness is inside in their heart and these men never boasted of the purity or the honesty of their own hearts instead they have all placed on record the truth that although Satan does much and the world does much at the end of the day the great enemy is always there within and that great enemy is a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately sick dear friends we need to just pause for a moment and let the truth of these things sink deep down into our hearts and minds 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 and if that's the case then surely the heart must be more treacherous than we suppose well perhaps you say all of these people lived a long time ago things have changed changed we live in more enlightened times these men were primitive but we're more civilized and advanced well things may be different in some respects but the heart of man is just the same as it has always been since the fall of Adam there really is no change there

I read these words in a book written by J.C. Ryle he says so long as every newspaper contains accounts of crime in one shape or another of all descriptions so long as 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 sentenced by the courts so long as people make a god and an idol of money and swear and pray god to damn their souls and break the sabbath day in every possible way and show an utter lack of affection and kindness to their own relations are angry and passionate on the slightest occasion and think nothing wrong about sexual immorality and adultery and think it clever and fair to deceive their neighbours 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 till 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 our enlightened age which professes to be so progressive and you know they 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 declare that the only possible reason which can be given for it is the plain teaching of this text the natural heart of every person is deceitful above all things and desperately sick there has to be there has to be some hidden cause and fountain of sin within us or people would never be guilty of such enormous foolishness let me very briefly mention the second point the Lord searches the heart

I the Lord search the heart and test the mind to give every man according to his ways according to the fruit of his deeds friends there are two things in this part of the text one is although you don't know your own heart the Lord God Almighty does and he keeps a close watch over them and the other thing is this that the Lord will one day call you and me to account and judge us accordingly now some people might react to that and say God will not be so extreme as to record our sins I'll be in no danger of judgment even though

[37 : 46] I live according to my own desires and intentions but my friend I want you to see how the prophet Jeremiah sweeps away this refuge of lies by warning us God searches the heart and God has set a day of judgment and he does this he tells us of these things immediately after mentioning the deceitfulness of our hearts we are so easily deceived when it comes to these spiritual truths the heart is deceitful but the truth is God searches the heart he tests the mind and he's going to bring you to judgment and our hearts say not a bit of it not a bit of it don't believe it don't believe it

God says Proverbs 14 12 reminds us that there is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way of death don't let your heart deceive you with regard to eternal truths and realities God searches your heart he knows what's in there and he's going to bring you to the day of judgment where you must give account for the thoughts intents and actions of your heart that is a sobering thought and we need therefore because the time has gone and gone so quickly we need in the light of that sobering thought to understand what is the only way to be saved if our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately sick there is no help to be found in ourselves if God is going to bring us to judgment how are we going to escape his judgment bear with me as I try to give you a very short answer from the Bible it's true to say that on the basis of any earthly plan salvation would be absolutely impossible but with God all things are possible and praise

God he has led before us a way by which even the vilest sinner can escape the judgment although your hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately sick and although the words of the book of common prayer say that there is no health in us I want to tell you that God loves you very much even in that condition for God so loved the world that world that was in rebellion against him that he gave his only begotten son that whoever whoever there is no limitation on that word whoever believes in him no matter how sinful how vile his heart might be though it be desperately wicked deceitful sick whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life so if you ask me who can be saved with such a heart as

I have who can be saved I answer all can be saved who give up their sins who grieve over them and who put their trust in Jesus Christ but you say what about our deceitful hearts and I say repent and believe and God will wash your sinful heart in the blood of his son and what's more he will make your heart new he shall recreate your heart in knowledge and righteousness and true holiness he shall fill your heart with the Holy Spirit he shall put love where there was hatred or indifference he shall put peace where there was doubt and anxiety he shall put strength where there was weakness in the words of the apostle Paul where sin abounded grace did much more abound and yes it's true your sin my sin does indeed abound but we will find if you will only put it to the test that God's grace abounds far more so my friend

I want to say to you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ Christ because he is the one who can remedy and fix your heart and save you from the consequences of your sins yes our hearts are deceitful above all things and unless our hearts be changed the Bible says that we will most certainly perish but in the name of my most gracious and loving master I offer to you this evening a perfect and complete remedy and I offer to you the freest salvation and I beg you don't reject it come to

[44 : 56] Jesus remember he came to save not the wise in their own eyes but he came to seek and to save that which was lost come to the Lamb of God it's written of him that he takes away the sin of the world and even though your hearts may be full of iniquity they shall be changed think of the words of Isaiah though your sins are like scarlet they shall be as white as snow though they are red like crimson they shall be as wool but take special heed of what I'm about to say in closing God has borne witness that except you choose this way of salvation the way of repentance and of faith you shall have no salvation and what's more the more often you reject the free and gracious offers of salvation so much more heavy will be your condemnation on the day of judgment that's why the prophet

Isaiah could say to the people of his day oh seek the Lord while he may be found call upon him while he is near let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts let him return to the Lord that he might have mercy upon him and to our God for he will abundantly pardon the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked who can know it who can understand it I the Lord search the heart and test the mind to give every person according to their deeds how can we be saved by coming to Jesus the Savior who can save us from our hearts and can deliver us as Paul says to the Thessalonians from the wrath to come and there's no other way except through

Jesus Christ may God bless his word to us this evening let us pray our heavenly father we confess that we are like David in Psalm 51 born in sin and shapen in iniquity and we have a deceitful heart that is desperately sick but we praise you that you have the remedy we thank you for Jesus Christ we thank you for the offer of a new heart and we pray with David again create in me a clean heart and renew a right spirit within me help us not to blame other people help us not to point the finger at circumstances or even the devil but help us to look within help us to understand our true state and then help us in humility and in contrition and with a broken heart to say

Lord save me save me from myself save me from my deceitful and sick and wicked heart and make me anew we thank you that you are in this saving business and we pray that every head bowed here in your presence would know the power of your saving grace transforming us into the likeness of your perfect holy harmless and undefiled son our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ in whose name we pray Amen Amen Amen.