

Jer. 17:5-10 (BCF 15) “Desperately Sick”

For the Children: Have you ever been so sick you could hardly move? A serious illness can leave the patient very weak, unable to get out of bed, lift a glass of water. Or even to take medicine. When you are that sick, you need someone else to care for you and do the things for you that you cannot do yourself. Sin is a disease like that. It makes us so weak, we cannot save ourselves. We cannot help ourselves. We cannot even make ourselves have faith. The Lord steps in to save us. He gives us the strength to turn to the Lord Jesus and trust Him for our salvation. Questions: In what ways is sin “total”? Why should we be glad that God doesn’t wait for us to come to Him for help, from our own free will? What does the Lord expect from us once He has given us a new heart?

Introduction:

First Point: The Totality of Sin

- 1) Deceitful and Sick: The “heart” refers to the whole inner man – mind, soul and will. It is “deceitful” – crooked and traitorous – more so than anything else in this world. No aspect of the inner man can be trusted. The heart is also “desperately sick” – with a malignant and incurable disease. One who is so very sick cannot move himself to turn to Christ of his own will. Hence the Bible also refers to man as “being dead” in his sins (Eph. 2:1,5). This is the nature of the unbeliever. Even the Christian has an old nature of this type clinging to him. The deceit and sickness of the heart leads the sinner to place his trust in the creature rather than in the Lord. The natural man’s heart turns away from the Lord (v. 5).
- 2) Original Sin: BCF 15 speaks of where this total depravity originated. Adam’s sin was “imputed” to us – counted as ours because Adam was our head and representative; and inherited by us – since Adam is the father of the human race. It has passed in this way to all humanity, even children – for all are conceived in sin. It affects the whole person at every level of our being. The result of this original sin is the various actual, personal sins that spring from this evil fountain within us. This is why we cannot stop sinning – even as believers, since we still have this old nature. If sinning were just a matter of following bad examples, and if we had free will, we should be able to stop – but we cannot. Free will is a myth.
- 3) All Deserve Condemnation: Original sin, as well as actual sins, mean that all sinners are guilty before God and deserve condemnation. The natural man is cursed with barrenness and death (vss. 5,10) and will be dealt with according to his sinful deeds – unless he turns to the Lord Jesus. He is our only hope, since we don’t have the ability to save ourselves, or even to seek God unaided.

Second Point: The Rescue from Sin

- 1) Forgiven by Grace: The doctrine of sin does not lead us to despair, because the Gospel tells us that sin is not imputed to God’s children unto condemnation (BCF 15). Because of Christ’s work, those who turn to Him are forgiven. Since we cannot save ourselves, or even use our will to seek God unaided, we should be glad He takes the initiative at every point – rather than complaining that He did so without our permission!
- 2) Leafy Trees: The goodness of His gracious work in us is seen in the contrast between the unbeliever and the believer, in vss. 6-8. The one who trusts in man will be like a shrub in a stony desert or a salty waste. The man who trusts in the Lord will be planted by Him – rather than planting himself by his own free will – like a tree beside abundant waters – with green leaves and continual fruit-bearing, even during a drought. The fact we don’t contribute to our own salvation has the most excellent outcome!
- 3) Not a Block of Wood: We cannot move towards God without a new heart and will (“regeneration”). He takes the initiative to give that new life before we can use our will properly. That does not mean the will is always inactive. Once we are born again, we can begin to trust the Lord, as v. 7 describes. We can begin to bear good fruit as v. 8 mentions. These are acts of the new-born will. With such a new will and heart, the believer does not “rest securely in sin” (BCF 15). His awareness of sin makes him sigh, longing to be completely free of it; he desires all the more to resist sin and strive to live a more holy life

Conclusion: