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YOUR HIDDEN PERSAU^ADER

by

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TEXT: Jeremiah 17:9,10

INTRODUCTION: Martin Luther said, "I fear my own heart more than the Pope and all his cardinals. For I have within me that great Pope self." Solomon said, "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Jesus Christ said, "Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adultries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies."

When the Bible speaks of the heart it is not

referring to that blood-pumping muscle thumping away inside your chest. It means that mysterious something within you that makes you feel and act, the seat of your affections, the control center of your life.

The heart is the steering wheel of a man's character, directing his moral conduct and guiding his will and affections. It is his hidden persuader. "As one thinketh in his heart, so is he."

As volcanos of hatred, violence and corruption erupt across our land, people ask in desperation: "What's the matter? Why do people act like this?" From God's Word the answer comes clear and certain: "Out of the heart are the issues of life."

This being so, the most important question we face is: "What is the condition of my heart?" Our text provides the answer. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

I. THE HEART IS DECEITFUL IN ITS CONDUCT. "The heart is deceitful above all things." The Hebrew word translated "deceitful" comes from the same root as does "Jacob", and means "trickster." Jacob was a trickster, a man so deceitful he lied to his father and cheated his brother. You didn't dare trust him. And God says, "Your heart is just like that. It's a Jacob."

This reveals the folly of the advice that tells us to "follow our hearts" and "let your conscience be your guide." Proverbs 28:26 declares, "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

Not only is the heart deceitful, but it is deceitful ABOVE ALL THINGS. Think of it! Of all the Satanic forces in the world that seek to deceive us, our own heart is our worst enemy, for the Bible says, "There is a way that seemeth good to man, but the ends thereof are the ways of death."

And the biggest trick our heart plays on us is telling us that there's nothing wrong with the heart! It whispers that man is basically good and repentance is unnecessary. Thus, many will come to Jesus in that last day, believing all is well, only to hear the Judge pronounce, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

Remember -- the solitary purpose of your unregenerated heart is to deceive you about your spiritual condition. Don't listen to it.

II. THE HEART IS DISEASED IN ITS CHARACTER. "And desperately wicked." This phrase literally means, "mortally ill." The heart is sick, and this sickness is so severe that unless God intervenes death will result.

Here is an urgent truth for modern man. The heart is incurable! Many admit their heart is sick, but they foolishly believe it can be cured. Some take a dose of reformation: you may stop stealing but that doesn't change the heart that made you steal in the first place. Some apply the ointment of new environment. I've seen couples whose marriages were on the rocks try to salvage them by moving into a newer house and a nicer neighborhood. But a fine house is no guarantee of marital fidelity. Here's a man who, falling under the Spirit's convicting power, for the first time realizes he's lost. But he doesn't go far enough; he merely patches up the old life by joining a church or learning the catechism.

Man's heart responds to no man-made medicine. His heart can't be cured. God must create a new one. We need to let Jesus Christ, the Great Physician perform a heart transplant in our lives.

III. THE HEART IS DIAGNOSED BY ITS CREATOR. "I the Lord search the heart..." The heart is inscrutable to man. Nobody knows or fully understands his own heart. We've all that plaintive cry, "I don't know why I did it!"

Since our conscience won't tell us the truth about ourselves, we must look elsewhere for an honest evaluation. Only God can see clearly into the dim recesses of our inner life, and only God can understand what is there. Verse 10 informs us that God carries on a constant and intense investigation of our hearts. Did you know that God is this interested in the contents of your heart?

The thought that God knows us so intimately may not be very comforting. It's not meant to be. For Jeremiah continues in the 10th verse by saying, "even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings." God searches our heart in order to judge us. Here's a sobering thought. God's judgment is based, not on what people think we are, but on what God knows us to be.

Jesus said in Luke 16:15, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

CONCLUSION.: God has promised to give us a new heart. Simply by receiving Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord we will become a new person. Old things will pass away. All things will become new -- in Jesus Christ.