

## THE HEART CONDITION (Mk. 7:14-23)

Mk. 7:14 And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: **15** There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. **16** If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. **17** And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. **18** And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; **19** Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? **20** And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. **21** For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, **22** Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: **23** All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

Once again Fife has been the target of cruel unadulterated evil. Almost two years ago a mother killed her son, and drove him from Edinburgh concealed in the boot of her car to bury him in the woods behind her mother's home in Kirkcaldy. Then, in this past week, the horrifying account of the pain and anguish that led to the death of the little boy in Thornton has sickened the nation ... *How evil can we become?!*

Ah, but it's only certain small sections of our society ... No, crimes are being implemented today on an unprecedented scale. From those who have plenty of money and prestige along the social ladder to those who haven't, we could catalogue a list of despicable acts that are on the increase and it seems as if the authorities are incapable of halting society's downward spiral.

In many ways, though, society has to consider its contribution to the decline for it has lost the aptitude, - in a number of areas, - to correctly define what is right and what is wrong. The problem is we are not sure anymore. Wickedness gets explained away as either some form of illness, or a series of negative factors in the criminal's background, or some other issue that is not really his/her fault ... and you can't blame the people because they've got a 'condition' ... psychopathic tendencies ... and you have to take all these things into consideration.

And even the way we react to these horrific instances ... We can turn our televisions on and listen to the most abhorrent details of what is taking place ... while eating our evening meals. We can say, how sad our world has

become ... and then turn over to another channel and become engrossed with something frivolous. How used to evil even *we* as Christians have become!

Let's call the problem by its proper name ... the name the Bible gives it ... *sin*. Sin is the curse that is ruining our world. It is increasingly *subtly* destructive and yet we continue to elect people who introduce more of the same laws that are further crippling our nation by rejecting God and His Word. Sin will one day be the cause of this planet's annihilation ... and it won't be as the consequence of a catastrophic nuclear explosion or the so-called 'greenhouse effect', for Peter and John foretold, **II Peter 3:10** *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up ... Rev. 21:1 ... for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away.*

Sin has emptied decency and replaced it with corruption ... and in many cases today, people are incapable of telling the difference. Sin has confused morals and ethics. It has perverted institutions ordained and established by God from creation. Sin justifies state murder of children while they ought to be safe in their mother's wombs. Sin promotes terrorists into positions of governmental responsibilities. Yes, sin is on a seemingly unstoppable rampage!

But, do you have to be a certain type of person to be a sinner, and to do these things? You see, that is the problem the Jews in Jesus' day had for that is what they thought. ... Are there different degrees of sinners, - are some worse than others? And, do you have to be born with an uncontrollable urge that makes you to become evil? Surely normal ordinary people aren't evil? ... When I was a teenager I used to go away on Christian weekends with a well-known evangelical organisation. One of the leaders who we all highly respected was a lovely man, - married to a lovely wife, - and he faithfully taught us the Word of God. However, a number of years later he was imprisoned for abusing little children ... He didn't look like a paedophile, nor talk like one. ... I've had a man in the pulpit ... and he actually came to the Lord when he was in prison for murdering at least two people connected with terrorism ... You would not have guessed he could have done it though ... but he did. People do not necessarily look evil, - some do ... but the vast majority don't ...

So what causes evil? In our Philosophy of Religion lectures we considered this question very deeply. We studied the answers given by philosophers, psychologists, psychoanalysts, behaviourists ... but by the time we trawled our way through their weighty investigations they had basically proffered excuses for wicked behaviour and had not even touched on its true source.

... And it is not something we inherently learn by ‘hanging out’ with the wrong crowd. Neither is it a behavioural pattern affected by where we lived and how we grew up. ... Here is where God’s Word says evil begins, **Jer. 17:9** *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.* ... It begins in the heart, and so God confirms, **Rom. 3:10** *There is none righteous, no, not one.* ... Sin works from the inside out ... and it doesn’t matter who you are, evil is what we have been born with, and Solomon sums it up, **Prov. 15:26** *The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD.*

Now, why do we need to emphasise this? The reason is ... we need to ‘get to grips’ again with how evil sin in all its shapes and forms sin actually is ... and surely an appropriate place to do this is in the house of God and among God’s people! Even *we* as Christians have become so used to seeing evil every day we are not being disgusted by it anymore! It doesn’t affect us the way it used to because it has increasingly become an acceptable way of life. We don’t like it, but we have to ‘put up’ with it ... and we have become accustomed to it!

Jesus addressed the people gathered round Him, **Mk. 7:14** *And when he had called all the people unto him, he said unto them, Hearken unto me every one of you, and understand: 15 There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. 16 If any man have ears to hear, let him hear. 17 And when he was entered into the house from the people, his disciples asked him concerning the parable. 18 And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; 19 Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? 20 And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. 21 For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, 22 Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: 23 All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.*

Did you notice the repetition of the word ‘defiled’ (κοιλόω), - twice in v.15, once in v.18, once in v.20, and once in v.23. That’s at the centre of what He was saying to them. They should have seen it for themselves, but they didn’t, because they couldn’t! And the word ‘defiled’ (κοιλόω) means to be dirty, filthy, corrupt, and unclean.

In the Old Testament, its equivalent (*chahal*) is used over two hundred times and extends the meaning to pollute, profane, and to violate. It is actually the word that’s used to describe Jesus on the cross, **5 he was wounded (*chahal*) for our transgressions** ... He was corrupted and defiled because of our sins which were laid upon Him ... **he was wounded (*chahal, polluted, profaned, violated, dirty, filthy, unclean*) for our transgressions.** ... Not only was Jesus defiled in the sight of His Father because of other people’s sins, - the sins of murderers, and rapists, and all kinds of evil people, - ... but He also became defiled because of *my* sins.

Of course though, that is not what the Pharisees taught their people. They had no such concept of their individual sin. They taught sin and defilement was a condition relating to a certain type of immoral and socially degenerate person ... for example, tax-collectors, prostitutes, lepers, - *they* and their kind were defiled ... but not ‘good’ people ... and especially not if you tithe and fast and keep all the religious ceremonies and rituals. That was the religious *delusion* they lived under. And they could tell you what evil was ... but it wasn’t anything *they* would do! Evil is what *bad* people do ... but not me and my kind. ... Evil was on the outside, not something that begins on the inside.

And how sad that must have been for Jesus to listen to and experience as He stood before these people. In Matthew’s account of this story Jesus said, - referring to the Pharisees and their self-righteousness, - **Mt. 15:14 Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.**

And so He set them aside, left them and entered into a house with His disciples, who were intrigued with what He had just said. ... Do you see what Jesus had described? ... The illustration Jesus was giving them was that what you put into your mouth, - what you eat, - will not defile you, for that is not unclean ... and then He said, **but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man.** ... In other words, - and I don’t want to be too graphic, - but

what Jesus was saying was that what you put into your mouth and what you eat will not defile you ... but then you digest it, and it runs through the various channels of your body until it leaves you in a form which is most definitely unclean and defiled!

Now, what is Jesus talking about that for? In fact, it is quite disgusting! But that was the illustration He used to get His message across. The disciples, on the other hand, they knew Jesus had a reason for being so graphic, but they were puzzled and so [his disciples asked him concerning the parable](#). ... They would have been brought up by being taught the same way as all the rest of the people had been taught, that is, evil is outside of you and it is your responsibility not to allow it to infiltrate your life. You were born good, not evil ...

However, it shows us how far behind they had left David's concept, - [Ps. 51:5 Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me](#), - ... they didn't see it like that anymore. They had 'progressed', and were far better than that! Sin was something on the outside ... It did not come from inside you, - you weren't born with it, - and you could, therefore, avoid sin and keep it out. ... In fact, you could be a master over it! In fact, when you think about it, sin doesn't control you ... you can control sin! ... Sadly, that's also what Adam and Eve thought in the garden for they reckoned they could disobey the clear command of God and remain in control ... They found out differently, to their disgrace and to their distress!

But that is not what Jesus said for here is how *He* saw it, [1 Sam. 16:7 ... the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart](#). ... And what does God say the heart is? ... [Jer. 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked ... That is what defiles, and that is why it defiles!](#) A deceitful heart is incurable, - there is nothing can be done with it ... and it is defiled long before anything comes into it from the outside! ... In the medical sphere, when the human heart suffers a heart attack, part of the heart dies and that part cannot be restored ... In the spiritual realm, *all* of the heart is dead, and there is *no* life in any of it! It is dead to God, whereas He is alive ... In other words, the sinful heart is the exact opposite of the perfect and holy God.

Now, obviously, Jesus is not referring to the human organ because the human heart is a good thing, - it is the muscle that pumps blood through the body ... Without it you would be dead! Also, in the Scriptures, the heart refers to that spiritual part of us where our emotions and desires dwell. And there is nothing intrinsically wrong with the heart because God is said to have a heart, - David, for example, was a man after God's own heart (Acts 13:22) ... and God promises, **1 Sam. 2:35** And I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in mine heart and in my mind ... **Jer. 3:15** And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

But the human heart in its natural condition, - untouched by God, - is treacherous and evil due to the effects of the Fall ... And God is in no doubt as to its total depravity, **Ps. 44:21** Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart. ... And even though, - in the early days of Christ's ministry, - some people were emotionally affected when they saw the miracles of Jesus and 'believed', **Jn. 2:24** Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, **25** And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man. ... He knew the profound sinfulness of their human hearts ... and their inadequate faith was getting in the way of true faith which is necessary for salvation! ... And the principle upon which Jesus was teaching His disciples in Mk. 7 was this ... evil does not come into you from the outside, but it comes out of you from the inside!

However, that wasn't how the people, - the disciples included, - had been taught in the synagogues ... Wickedness and evil came from the outside and it was your duty to stop them making an entrance into your life ... and that was at the hub of the problem the Pharisees had with the disciples for not washing their hands ceremonially (Mk. 7:3) ... Stop evil getting in, but the sad fact as far as God is concerned, the evil is already in! The Jews had always been taught the law of Moses, with all the 'extra-canonical' additional criteria added by the religious leaders ... touch this, don't touch that, circumcision, eat this, don't eat that etc etc. But Jesus said no, it doesn't matter what you put into you for the heart is already evil for it is a cesspool of sin. ... You want to know why you disobey God? ... All you have to do is look into your heart and you will see how instinctively turned against Him it is! ... So, the problem of sin is not external, - it is not somebody else's fault, - ... it is internal because the problem of sin is at our very core. ...

Gotman Locks is a eminent orthodox Jewish Hasidic rabbi who regularly tries to convert Christians to Judaism. On one occasion he wrote, “Accepting Jesus as Messiah would mean the destruction of the Jewish people for Jesus was opposed to Jewish teaching”. ... And he is right! ... And then Gotman Locks begins the next sentence, “He [*Jesus*] did things like picking food from the fields on the Sabbath”. ... Judaism, like all other religions, is an outward and an external religion ... and Jesus said it is not about outside the heart, but salvation from sin is all about being freed from the bondage in which the heart has been imprisoned.

Jesus, seeing how unclear these things were to His disciples, continued to explain ... telling them first of all about the obvious sins, - **adulteries, fornications, murders**, - before introducing the sins which none of us are able to escape from ... the sins for which we regularly make excuses, **20** And he said, **That which cometh out of the man** [*ἐκ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐκπορευόμενοι*], **that defileth the man** [*ἐκεῖνο κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον*]. **21** **For from within, out of the heart** [*ἐκ τῆς καρδίας*] of men, proceed [*ἐκπορεύομαι, pours out, gushes*] evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications [*πορνεία, all kinds of extramarital unnatural sexual sin*], murders, **22** Thefts, covetousness [*greediness*], wickedness [*πονηρία, absolute depravity*], deceit [*δόλος, craftiness*], lasciviousness [*ἀσέλγεια, unbridled lust*], an evil eye [*envious*], blasphemy [*abusive towards others*], pride [*ὑπερηφανία, haughtiness, arrogance*], foolishness [*ἀφροσύνη, thoughtlessness, recklessness*]: **23** All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.

... By the time we go down through that list, can any of us say we are not defiled? The aptitude to be defiled doesn't come from the outside but it rises up out of what is already *in the heart*. Nobody else is to blame. Sin is not society's fault. It is not my mother or my father's fault. It is not the fault of my friends ... but it is *my* fault for **Mk. 7:23** **All these evil things come from within, and defile the man.**

And that is the truth Jesus was labouring to get across to His disciples ... so why is it so important for Christians to understand such an ugly subject as the origin of sin and the effect it has? Well, first of all, because it affects us too ... and secondly, ... the only means by which we can be cleansed from sin is through the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ poured out for us on Calvary. “What can wash my sins away? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus”. ... If our sin is not washed away, - cleansed and removed, - we face a lost eternity in

Hell where the wrath of God never abates or recedes ... and it can never be quenched!

It is not religion that cures the heart problem. ... It is only by trusting in the merits of God's grace alone for **I Jn. 1:7** the blood of Jesus Christ [*God's*] Son cleanseth us from all sin. In the New Covenant, by which we have been redeemed, God promised, **Ezek. 36:25** Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. **26** A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. **27** And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

That is how salvation works, - God changes us from the inside, **Jn. 3:7** Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again ... **Titus 3:5** Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; **6** Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; **7** That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Of course, the religious condition of Israel at the time of Jesus was seriously disastrous ... In fact, it had become so spiritually bankrupt the people no longer knew how to become right with God ... Is that not also how it is today? People have all their own ideas and speculations about how they will meet God and what they will tell Him ... but they haven't a clue because there is only way to enter Heaven and that is through the relationship with God by believing in His Son as our Saviour. All other attempts at salvation, - be they even propagated by a religious denomination, - leads the sinner blindly to Hell ... Paul wrote, **II Tim. 3:12** ... all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. **13** But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

... So it's not going to get any easier being a Christian but here's the point Jesus was making ... our biggest problem continues to be contending with the desires of our own heart. And, consequently, the Holy Spirit was sent and He shall remain in and with the Church until Jesus returns, and He will keep us, - the redeemed and saved Church, - in the righteousness of Christ, **Jn. 16:13** when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

People often tell you the problem, but they don't tell you the solution. They will tell you what you need, but they don't tell you how to get it. ... Jesus told the disciples about the problem, the solution ... and where to find it ... And they found it, for after He left and returned to Glory, they stood in the market places of Jerusalem with the message, **Acts 2:22** Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: **23** Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: **24** Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it ... **21** And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

He is the Great Physician. He is the only One Who has the cure for a bad heart. Remember what Philip told the Ethiopian eunuch, **Acts 8:37** If thou believest with all thine heart ... and as Paul wrote, **Rom. 10:9** That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. **10** For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

May our hearts be healthy and strong in the Lord! Amen.