

The Remedy for Heart Failure

"The heart of the matter is a matter of the heart."

I. Hearts deceived

"The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jer. 17:9)

A. The Wicked

1. Arrogant

a. Above men

"They scoff and speak with malice; loftily they threaten oppression." (v. 8)

b. Above God

"They speak from on high. They have set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue parades through the earth." (v.10)

2. Multiplying Depravity

a. Leading others astray

"My people turn to them and lap up all they say, asking, 'How will God find out?'" (v. 10-11)

b. But well thought of:

"...filled with all wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice... they are haters of God...and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but give hearty approval to those who practice them." (Rom. 1:29-32).

B. The Psalmist

1. A believer

"Surely God is good to Israel." (v. 1)

Shorthand statement of belief in God's covenantal love - His initiating choice and promise to love a people.

2. On slippery ground

a. Troubled – It's all about them! Comparing himself to others

The wicked have it all:

Portion - allotted the most, *"prosperity, their eyes bulge with fat, they increase in riches." (v. 3,7)*

Peace – Shalom, the well being, ease and blessing the righteous deserve is enjoyed by the wicked.

"No trouble, not stricken, their bodies fat and sleek, always at ease." (v. 4,5,12)

Paradox: Why do the wicked prosper, while the "innocent" suffer?

Plagued with doubt – he is questioning God's goodness, not His existence.

"It is not that his faith is slipping into unbelief; doubt is something only a believer can experience, for you can only doubt what you believe." (Wilcock, 7)

b. Pierced –It's all about me! His meaningless pain and suffering

Envy and bitterness

"I was envious of the arrogant, my heart was embittered and I was pierced within." (v. 3, 21)

Self pity

"In vain have I kept my heart pure and washed my hands in innocence. For all the day long I have been stricken, and rebuked every morning." (v. 13)

Dead end – all of his reasoning leads to despair.

“As I pondered to understand this, it was troublesome (or wearisome) in my sight.” (v. 16)

II. A Heart that Perceives

A. Worship – It’s all about God

“Until I came into the sanctuary of God and perceived...” (v. 17)

What did he see?

1. Ultimate reality of God – His worth, beauty and sovereignty

2. Centrality of Word and Sacrament

Word - God’s promises:

“I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God.” (Ex. 6:7)

“For the Lord’s portion is His people.” (Deut. 32:9)

Sacrifice - God’s provision:

The innocent in place of the guilty

B. Changes his perspective

1. **He realizes he’s been a beast** – thinking purely on a horizontal level like a creature of base instinct, *“the ‘natural man’, man untouched by special grace, unilluminated by the Spirit of God.” (Motyer, 202)*

2. The wicked – are destined for everlasting destruction

Slippery slope to Judgment

“Thou dost cast them down to destruction...They’re utterly swept away by sudden terrors!” (v. 19)

Rejection

“Like a dream when one awakes, O LORD, when aroused, Thou wilt despise their form.” (v. 20)

They are like phantoms chasing after an illusion. To God they are like a bad dream that vanishes with morning light. They will be *“[unmade] along with everything they lived for.” (Kidner, 290)*

Only two “afterwards:”

“We can be left utterly and absolutely outside – repelled, exiled, estranged, finally and unspeakably ignored. On the other hand, we can be called in, welcomed received, acknowledged.” (Lewis, 30)

3. The righteous– are destined for present and everlasting glory

Fallible people are in the grip of an infallible God – It’s all about God with me!

a. Even when we mess up

*“When my heart was embittered...then I was senseless and ignorant...like a beast...
Nevertheless I am continually with You.” (v. 22-23)*

Assurance

“I am continually with you’ means peace with God, acceptance in His presence.”(Motyer, 202)

Eternal security

*“You have taken **hold** of my right hand. With your counsel you will **guide** me, and afterward **receive** me to glory” (v. 24)*

NT Counterpart:

"And those [God] predestined, He also called; and those He called, He also justified, and those He justified, He also glorified." (Rom. 8:30)

b. Even when we face death and despair

*"My flesh and my heart may fail, **but God** is the rock of my heart and my portion forever."(v. 26)*

Rock - Strength – *"Thou art my rock and fortress."(Ps. 31:33)*

Protection – shielded from God's judgment through Christ, our rock.

"I will put you in the cleft of the rock and cover you ... until [My glory] has passed by."(Ex. 33:22)

Portion -Inheritance or allotment when dividing the spoils of war

God gives *"according to the riches of His glory."(Eph. 3:16)* Infinite God = infinite resources.

"With God, you can throw mathematics out the window. If God is your portion, each one of you gets one hundred percent of the pie. The ultimate good in the universe has come to you and given Himself to you, one hundred percent." (Hamilton)

III. A Heart Transplant

Paradox: Why did *The Innocent One* suffer so that the guilty would prosper?

A. Jesus' flesh and heart really failed - for us

1. Pierced

"He was pierced for our transgressions...and with His wounds we are healed." Is. 53:5)

2. Troubled

"Now is my soul troubled. What shall I say? 'Father save me from this hour?' No, but for this purpose, I have come to this hour."(John 12:27)

He was separated from His Father so that you would be welcomed.

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And...I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also." (John 14:1-4)

B. Jesus was "received afterward into glory"

1. To secure our resurrection

His unbreakable hold on us takes us through death where afterward we will be "received to glory."

"Those who are united with Christ can rejoice that, by his resurrection, He is the 'first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.'" (1 Cor. 15:20, Longman, 278)

2. To send us His Spirit

"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you." (John 16:7)

3. To give us a new heart – it's all about God 'in' you!

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone...and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you. (Ez. 35:26-27)

"The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Rom. 5:5)

Questions for Discussion

1. Scripture is full of beautiful paradox - where things aren't what you'd expect. Think of some instances in Jesus' parables or historic events where the impossible becomes possible.
2. The psalmist comes to realize that "*the nearness of God is [his] good*". Is there a time when God has shown you that He alone is everything? Describe.
3. Psalm 73 ends with this: "*I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Your works.*" (v. 28)
How can we effectively share the good news in our sphere of influence?

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