

LOCATING THE PROBLEM

“Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed” (Ja. 1:14)

When a car stops, when a patient is sick, or when someone sins, it is wise to try and locate the source of the problem. Once the source of the problem has been identified, the mechanic can fix the car, the doctor can prescribe treatment, and the sinner can be victorious. Sincere people can waste a lot of money replacing car parts at random. Someone said: “If it ain’t broke don’t fix it”. It does no good to replace car parts that are working. We need to locate the source of the problem.

In this regard the Scriptures are crystal clear about sin. Sin does not start outside and work its way in, it starts inside and works its way out. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent, but the real problem was within. When Jesus was criticized for eating with unwashed hands He explained to Peter: **“Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.” (Matt. 15:17 – 20).** Jesus is clear, sin is a problem of the heart!

In those dark days before the flood **“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.” (Gen. 6:5).** If the thoughts of a man’s heart were “only evil all the time”, then his actions would only be evil “all the time”. As Jesus said, man’s conduct proceeds from his heart.

King Saul was rejected by God because of his rebellious heart (1 Sam. 23:14). In the days of Jeremiah God condemned the people because of their stubborn and rebellious hearts (Jer. 5:23). Man’s heart is deceitful and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). Jesus lamented that the people honored him with their lips while their hearts were far from Him (Matt. 15:8). Simon the Sorcerer was captive to sin and filled with bitterness because his heart wasn’t right with God (Acts 8:18 – 24).

The simple solution to this problem was promised by Ezekiel: **“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (Ez. 36:26, 27).**

The transformation that takes place with a “new heart” and a “new spirit” produces a “new creation”. This is precisely the terminology used by Paul: **“If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;” (2 Cor. 5:17).** In fact, he has been “born again” (Jn. 3:3, 5). This transformation occurs when we confess with our mouth and “believe” in our “hearts” that God raised Jesus from the dead (Rom. 10:9, 10). We are no longer slaves to sin for we have obeyed from the “heart” the message of Christ and He has put His new covenant in our “minds” and written it on our “hearts” (Heb. 8:10). This transformation is so radical that it like life from the dead. Baptism beautifully pictures this for: **“We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Rom. 6:4)**

Judas Iscariot located the problem in his own life and said “I have sinned” (Matt. 27:4). He was correct! He had allowed Satan to enter in (Lk. 22:3; Jn. 13:27). Nobody else was to blame. He “chose” to invite Satan into his heart. Had Judas come to Christ there is no doubt that he would have been forgiven. Whoever comes to Jesus He will never cast out (Jn. 6:37). He had correctly located the problem, but totally missed the solution. The Prodigal Son also located the problem and said “I have sinned” (Lk. 15:18). Fortunately he came home to the Father and was saved. What will you do?