

A Different Take On: ‘The heart is deceitful above all things’

Verse 9 in Jeremiah 17, in our English Bibles, is one of the chief sources for the PSA¹ doctrine. It also reinforces the notion that Father is an angry God, just waiting for us to step out of line so he can punish us in one way or another. Here’s the verse:

Jeremiah 17:9 NKJV – “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately² wicked;*”

According to some translations and the footnote to the NKJV, the heart’s wickedness is incurable (footnote 2 above). The teaching that’s propagated from this is that you can’t trust your wicked heart, it can’t be cured, so it must be suppressed. The concept produces hopelessness in believers because they think it can’t be cured and they’ll never be good enough for God to really love them as they are as a person.

That idea is mixed with teaching on the ‘flesh’, so that Christians who are serious about living as Jesus would want them to, develop an austere lifestyle or they become monastic in their way, and focus on prayer and Bible study, to earn ‘brownie points’³ with Father.

To get the right interpretation of the passage, it requires the reader to understand that this verse has been interpreted by the translators. They used the original Greek and Hebrew, but they had a different understanding of Father from that of Jesus and the Apostles. The change in the Hebrew view of God came from a revelation of him through the prophets which came after the Torah was given. That’s a critical point to grasp. The Hebrews learnt from God about himself through his words given to them by the prophets.

Originally there was an undifferentiated view of God and Satan. That meant, if something bad happened, it was God, and Satan did it. If it was good, it was God himself who did it. At the beginning of the Israelite nation, they didn’t have a view of good things and bad things, where God does what’s good and Satan does what’s bad. They saw everything that happened as God’s work, but it was the wrong view of him.

Looking at the Septuagint⁴, which is the OT produced in Greek some time from the 3rd-1st centuries BC⁵. The Jewish scribes who translated it wrote that **the heart is ‘deep’, not wicked**.⁶

βαθεία	η	καρδία	παρά	πάντα	
[[is] deep	The	heart]	beyond	all [things],	
και	άνθρωπος	εστι	όστις	γνώσεται	αυτόν
and	man	is,	who	shall know	him?

The verse should be read like this:

“The heart is deep, beyond all things, and man is, who shall know him?”

So, the heart is wonderfully deep. That means there’s depth to a person, and it relates back to being made in the Creator’s image. That completely changes our understanding of ourselves, who we are, and our identity.

1 – Penal Substitutionary Atonement

2 – ‘incurably sick’ www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Jer+17%3A9&version=NKJV#en-NKJV-19367

3 – Earn the favour of someone. Get them to see you in a ‘better light’.

4 – The Greek version of the OT en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint

5 – en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Septuagint#Textual_history

6 – GRAPHIC: “The Interlinear Greek-English Septuagint Old Testament”
archive.org/details/InterlinearGreekEnglishSeptuagintOldTestamentPrint

We don't need to see ourselves as a "wicked sinner" or a "sinner saved by grace", the ideas hammered home against us. We're actually righteous. We've been made righteous through the righteousness of Messiah. We now have the right identity as 'sons of God'.

This proper attitude of ourselves agrees with our status of being created a little lower than God himself (elohim)⁷ and with glory and majesty.⁸ We don't need to see ourselves as a 'worm' who has to struggle through life because we're a sinner. That's not reality for us.

If we approach the topic of the heart from a New Covenant perspective, we should come up with a positive attitude as well.

For those who need scriptures, we have these:

- Ezekiel 36:26 – “I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.”
- Romans 6:17 – “Thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed.”
- Acts 15:9 – “[God] made no distinction between [Jew] and [Gentile], having cleansed their hearts by faith.”
- John 7:38 – “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.”
- 1 Timothy 1:5 – “The aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:17 – “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Time to operate out of our real identity as sons so we can grow and mature, instead of thinking of ourselves as miserable sinners or living in fear that we don't measure up enough for Father to love us dearly.

Believe It or Not! **The choice is yours**

Whatever you choose to believe won't negatively impact Father's relationship with you

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(Readers will need to look up for themselves any scriptures alluded to in this document)

7 – SEE: Psalm 8:5 in the Orthodoxy Jewish Bible www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Tehillim%208:5&version=OJB

8 – SEE: “Do We Have Deity?” canberraforerunners.org/wp-content/uploads/Do-We-Have-Deity.pdf