

A NEW HEART ALSO WILL I GIVE YOU
By Ron Harvey

**A message preached at Grace Baptist Church, Bartlett, Tennessee on
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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.

Ezekiel 36:26

INTRODUCTION

Our text for this morning is a promise. It is a promise that was given to Israel in the Old Testament. Now the glorious history of the nation of Israel which began around 1500 BC with Moses was now coming to a very inglorious end around 600 BC. And the people were in captivity in Babylon. Israel had long ago left their God and they worshipped idols and they worshipped other gods just like the other nations. And in the midst of this great catastrophe, God issued another promise by the mouth of Ezekiel.

Now this new promise was not a promise to increase the size of their lands. It was not a promise to increase the size of their flocks. It was not a promise of victory in battles. It was not a promise of a long and fruitful life. It was not a promise of health and wealth. All of these things God had already promised to Israel if only they would obey him.

But Israel utterly failed along the way. From Egypt to Canaan they traveled a road of sin and rebellion and they forfeited those earthly blessings that would have been theirs by obedience. From the Red Sea to the Dead Sea they failed. From beginning to end they failed because they had a stony heart. And this stony heart would not bow down in obedience to God. No matter the consequences the stony heart would not give way.

But at the end of the journey, after the long history of Israel's failures, after it was proven that the sinful heart of man, even the sinful heart of God's own people, would never lay down in restful obedience to God, God made a new promise. And this time God said, I will change your hearts.

Look at our text.

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.

This wonderful and amazing promise is at the core of the new covenant referred to in Hebrews chapter eight. This promise was not like those former promises under the Old Mosaic Covenant which were conditional promises which Israel forfeited when they broke God's commands. But this promise is the great promise of salvation indeed. And God said, "I will give you a new heart."

I want you to stop and consider this morning the great wonder of the love of God. What love it was when God first created man and gave him everything that was necessary to enjoyment of life. God watered the ground for him and planted him a garden. And the garden was watered by pure streams that flowed freely through it. And fruit came forth with very little effort on the part of Adam. And God gave Adam a woman. And Adam had personal fellowship with God himself.

But then, with no reason, and in full rebellion, Adam sinned against God. And the penalty of sin fell not on Adam only, but on us all.

Now when the angels sinned, their doom was settled forever. There was no redemption for them. There was no way of restoration made for them. And so, they endure forever the hard consequences of their sin.

But God's love was manifest toward fallen mankind and God has determined to make a new creation of men. God has no mercy on fallen angels, but, for whatever reason, he has chosen to be merciful to men. And here is what he says,

"I will take away that stony heart which has rebelled against me and I will make you again. I put my hand to make you once and you have become undone by your sin. But now, I put my hand a second time to the work of creation. And I put you to the potter's wheel a second time. And I will make you a vessel of mercy and a vessel of honor. And I will take away the stony heart and will give you a heart of flesh."

Now I ask you, is this not the most wondrous act of grace and love

that you have ever heard of? Mighty angels are cast into the lake of fire forever. But God has made a covenant with man that he will create him again and make him new.

Now this morning I will try to show first the need for a new heart. And then, after that, we will look at the nature of this great salvation which God works in the soul.

I. The need for a new heart.

Now here is a mystery. You will never fully appreciate the need for a new heart until God has given you one. That old stony heart will never admit that it is stony. That old heart will never see the need for a new one.

Depravity is a word that we use around here to describe the condition of the natural man. And the natural man does not recognize his own depravity. He thinks there is yet something in himself that is worthy of God's acceptance. And he will never be driven to seek fulfillment in the free mercy and grace of our God.

Israel struggled with stony hearts for 1000 years before they were carried away into Babylon. And even later at the time of Christ, their stony hearts preferred the righteousness of the law to the free grace of Christ.

My prayer for us all this morning is that we would come to recognize the stoniness of our natural hearts.

The house that we live in is not a house that is just a little out of repair. It is not a house with a shingle or two blown off. There is not a hole here and a crack there. But our house is rotten throughout. The very foundations have given way to sin. All of the lumber in our house has been eaten through by worms. Our house is ready to fall in around us.

And our God does not attempt to repair it at all. God doesn't come in and attempt to mend it. He doesn't attempt to shore up the walls and repaint. He does not try to restore the foundation. The old house is utterly worthless. And it shall be swept away and God will build us a new house.

Look what the Lord says,

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.

Now, you might think it an extreme measure for God to utterly cast off the old heart and create a new one. But the Scriptures make it abundantly clear that there is no value in the old one.

From the earliest times, after Adam sinned, the house had rotted.

Adam's first born son, Cain, was a murderer. And you see how sin rotted his house.

Noah's day: And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5) And so, you see that in Noah's day the house was rotted.

Moses' day: And even in the day of Moses, the house was beyond repair. Though God promised Israel a new land and great prosperity, the house was already eaten up and was falling down and could not be saved.

And so, when Israel was utterly spoiled and led away in chains to Babylon, God said, "I will build you a new house."

The old house that we were born with, this carnal house, with this carnal heart, is a house of depravity.

If you ever watch the news, it must occur to you that the old heart is a fallen monstrosity. Human beings are capable of the most heinous crimes against one another and against God. The human heart has rotted. And it is capable of every imaginable sin.

Example: Perhaps the greatest sin of all time is when human beings crucified God himself. They demonstrated the darkness of the human soul when they harshly killed the Lord Jesus Christ. It was wicked hands that did such a thing, it was foolish hands, it was depraved hands that did so. The heart of man is so utterly blind in its natural condition that it could not see the Light of the World. And they

stripped him and scourged him and hung the Light of the world on a pole and in their blindness they could not see the light.

What a desperate condition the human heart is in.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Jeremiah 17:9

Worms have eaten through the heart of man and he is desperately wicked.

And it is quite clear that human nature cannot be made better. Many different philosophies have emerged which have purported to have an answer to human depravity, but they have all failed.

Example: Trying to correct human nature is like trying to adjust a weathervane by turning it to the east when the wind is blowing to the west. As soon as you let go, it turns back again to its place.

And so, human nature cannot be adjusted.

Example: An angry man cannot be made peaceful. You might teach him to grit his teeth and hold it inside, but he will burn within with malice and hate and with revenge.

Example: A sinful man cannot be reformed by religion. What a monstrosity an unregenerate man is in the church. In very short order, the church begins to recognize the inconsistencies of his profession. And he is an unsightly sore on the body of Christ.

It is utterly hopeless for a man to try to appear whole by joining a church when his heart is still cankerous and eaten away with worms.

Just as a leopard cannot brush off his spots, so an evil heart cannot be brushed away under the guise of religion.

We could go on and on regarding the need for a new heart. Who could possibly fully discuss the depth of the depravity of man?

But let me say that when we are talking about the heart of a man, we are not talking about this vital, physical organ in our chest, but we are talking about the very nature of man. The heart of something is the nature of something. It is the very core from which all else springs. And the nature of something cannot be changed.

Example: A lion cannot be changed into a sheep. The lion is not going to graze peacefully in the meadow and eat the grasses of the field. A lion is going to hunt for meat. And he will have his meat at the expense of the sheep.

Example: A vulture will gorge himself on the foulest of meat. But you will not see him perch on the barn door and eat grain like other birds.

Example: A sinful man by nature will never bow in humble adoration of the holiness of God. The holiness of God is so contrary to the nature of man that man has no interest in it whatsoever.

Is it possible that one who has sung the song of drunkenness and revelry and adultery and uncleanness, can, out of the same lips, sing the high praises of a holy God in heaven? And the answer is that a sinful nature will never do it. An evil heart will always follow the path to evil. It will pass up the pure waters of holiness to drink from the stagnant pond of sin. That is his nature and that is what man will do.

And so, I hope you see that we must have a new nature. We must be made new or we will never see the friendly side of the face of God.

But our text says,

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.

It is with great joy that I will now try to set before you,

II. The nature of this great change God works in us.

A. It is a divine work.

It is a divine work from beginning to end. God gives a man a new heart (a new nature) and the work is a work of God alone for it says,

A new heart also will I give you.

Nowhere in our text will you find any reference to the work of the sinner. It is the work of God and the work of God alone that saves a man.

It is here where we see the great divide between Arminianism and Calvinism. And it is at this point that Arminianism falls to the ground.

The very gospel of Jesus Christ is that salvation is of the Lord alone. It is his work and He takes great pride in his work. It is not a cooperative work between a man with a sinful nature and God with a holy nature. But it is an exclusive work of God. And that is why it says,

A new heart also will I give you.

The truth that salvation is of the Lord will stand the test of the ages and can never be moved, because it is the immutable truth of the living God.

We sing that song, "All the Way My Savior Leads Me." And it is the most blessed truth that every part of salvation is God's work. But it is never clearer than in this portion of salvation – the making of a new heart within us.

Is it not perfectly clear that we cannot change our own nature? This must be God's work. This is beyond all power of man. By nature we are sinners and our nature loves sin. And therefore our nature does not desire to seek out a new nature.

Our old nature has no inclination toward holiness. It is not interested in it. And therefore, if we are to be changed, it must be by a creative act of God himself.

Now when God gives us a new heart it is not only a divine work, but also,

B. It is a gracious work.

Notice that it says, “A new heart I will give you.”

A gift is a purely gracious act and when God puts a new heart into a man, it is not because that man deserves a new heart. There was nothing in that old nature that prompted God to give him a new heart. That old nature did nothing but anger God.

The Scriptures teach that God gives a man a new heart simply because he wishes to do it. It says he does it “according to his good pleasure.” (Eph.1:5)

But you say, “Doesn’t he give it to the man who cries out for a new heart?”

And the answer is that the old nature does not cry out for a new heart. The old nature only cries out for ways to indulge the old nature. It cries out for more opportunities for sin. It has no desire to cry out at all for holiness.

Example: A pig does not cry out for a nice, clean bath. Rather, if you wash him up, he yearns to wallow again in the mire.

No sinner ever first came to God. Rather, God comes to the sinner. No sinner ever first loved God. Rather, God first loved the sinner. And no sinner ever first sought out a new heart. Rather, God first gave the new heart.

And so you see how the new nature is a pure gift out of God’s heart of grace. The new nature is a gracious work of God. It is a gracious change, freely given, without any merit whatsoever of the creature. It is not based in any way on any good will or desire on the part of the sinner. God does it according to his own good pleasure and not according to the will of man.

We have seen that when God gives us a new heart it is an exclusive work of God and it is a gracious work of God. But now, I would have you see that,

III. It is an effectual change that is worked in man.

The creation of a new heart is the very essence of salvation. It makes man a new creation.

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away; behold, all things are become new.

II Corinthians 5:17

So, when God gives a new heart, there is a radical change. There is an effective change.

Before God gives a new heart, man revolts against his Maker and his Savior. But where God determines to save, save he will. God will have the sinner, if God determines to have him. Man resists the will of God and his sin nature resists with all its might, but man's might is not equal to the majestic might of the Almighty God. And when God swoops down in his chariot of salvation, he irresistibly saves and conquers man's heart.

Now I would like for you to know that when God gives a new heart,

IV. It is an immediate change that is worked in man.

Now there are many works of God within the concept of salvation which are progressive in nature. Sanctification is a work that is done over the course of a man's life. But, to give a man a new heart is a work that is done in an instant.

It is a work of God that is done in a moment. It is done in the twinkling of an eye. It is a flash of lightening that strikes the very soul of man and makes him new. God puts a new heart in a sinner and he becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus.

Anyone listening to this message may be sitting where they are an enemy of God with a wicked heart – a stony heart. But if God so wills it, the spark of life will drop into your soul and in that moment you will see your

great need and you will fly to Christ for mercy. Other parts of salvation are done gradually, but regeneration is the instantaneous work of God's sovereign, effectual and irresistible grace.

CONCLUSION

And now let me close this message by saying that the doctrines of grace, and specifically the doctrine of the gracious bestowal of a new heart, should be the most encouraging of messages to the sinner. God says,

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.

Now there are many sinners who are driven to despair because they suppose that they cannot be saved. Perhaps you are one who feels this way. You suppose that you are too guilty. You are too vile. You believe that other people might find mercy, but not you, for you do not deserve to be saved.

And let me say once again, that God never saves a man because of what he is and he does not save us because there is anything good in us. He that is the worst of sinners is just as eligible for mercy as the best of sinners. He that has been the poster child for immorality is just as eligible for mercy as he that has been the model of moral excellence.

Example: When a farmer goes to plant his crop, he looks for fertile ground. He doesn't plant on the rocks or in the sand. But he looks for good soil.

But this is not the way God saves. If God only saved out of fertile soil, there would be none to save. God is just as happy to begin with the rocky soil and he will turn the stony heart into a heart of flesh.

God can take the heart of a thief or a harlot or a drunkard and he can bring them to their knees and make them cry out for mercy. And he does this by giving them a new heart and taking away the stony heart.