

Communication and Coming Out of Babylon (Part 2)

The Evil Heart and the Converted Heart

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My sermon on the Last Great Day was based within God's Revelation 18: 4 command that we take strong steps to come out of Babylon lest we receive of her plagues along with it. But coming out is physically impossible because Babylon is a worldwide system. However, we can nonetheless come out of it spiritually by rejecting its influence. That influence is achieved through the communication of the beliefs, values, and practices of the cultures into which we are born. These things are absorbed by us with virtually no resistance. They are in fact all we know until long after the foundational damage is already done through or during childhood and adolescence.

One of the clear examples of how this occurs is the language we speak as children. It is native to the environment we are born into; in this case meaning our home. We simply absorb it through the verbal communication of our parents, older siblings, extended family, and the community. We do this without question. We do not critically evaluate and then determine which language we choose to speak, and it thus becomes a major part of what we are.

In the same manner other characteristics of the culture also become a part of what we are. So strong are these absorbed characteristics that we find, following God's calling of us, that we are held in bondage to them, and find it very difficult to break free from any of them that might be damaging to our relationship with God. The problem is that the source of the overwhelming number of the beliefs, values, and practices absorbed is Satan. He has, as the Bible confirms, deceived the whole world, and he has had virtually a free hand as god of this world to communicate these things to which we are in bondage to all of mankind.

Much of the influence from Satan's world is through the five senses: sight, hearing, smelling, taste, and touch. All of life's experiences are lived with these receptors constantly involved and leaving impressions upon our heart, or, as we might say, our mind and memory, and therefore these become the basis of our attitudes and our character.

Additionally, both informal and formal instruction is taking place in the home, in the schools, all the way up to and including universities, and of course through churches, or the lack thereof. In other words, I am saying that even atheism and agnosticism are to some degree schools.

We also know that there is some form of communication between us and animate objects, such as plants, which thrive better when the person tending them loves them. In addition to this, there are inanimate objects such as water, whose crystals mysteriously distort in the present of negative attitudes.

The Bible confirms that communication can take place between us and spirit beings, whether from God the Father or Jesus Christ, or Satan and his horde of demons—those spirits imprisoned beneath the canopy of air that covers the earth and in which we have life and

breath. We share the same environment with them. The earth was their first place of habitation without us being present. They view us as invaders, and therefore the enemy to be destroyed before earth is completely given to us without *them* being present. This will be a complete reversal of how things literally began.

In regard to the subject now at hand—the dangerous quality of communication from spirit beings—is that the communication can be made, performed, put into our mind, influencing us without any involvement of our senses. We see nothing, hear nothing, taste nothing, smell nothing, or feel nothing while the communication is being made. That is scary business. We would nonetheless, despite no response from our sensory receptors, be motivated to believe or disbelieve something, to accept or reject something, or to say something, or keep silent, depending upon the circumstance. Additionally there may be no reaction whatever right at the moment of communication, but the thought would be stored and available for use later or even added to.

What I am speaking of here is a usage of what the Bible terms as "spirit." In the New Testament, the word from which "spirit" is translated is *pneuma*. If you are familiar with *Strong's*, it is # 4154. It literally means "a current of air." Notice that it is moving: breath, blast, or breathes. However, the word is very frequently used *figuratively*. When done so, it indicates a vital principle, disposition (an attitude), the rational soul, or an invisible super-human. For example: God is Spirit. Jesus Christ is Spirit. Angels and demons are also spirit.

As you can see, literally, as with wind or breath, or figuratively, it indicates something invisible, immaterial, as with God, angels, or demons. They are all invisible. They are all immaterial. Whether literally or figuratively, spirit is always something of power, and even something of considerable power, and thus the foremost elements of spirit within the Bible are invisibility, power, and immateriality. There is nothing material to it.

Turn now to John 6. This is certainly one of the more important chapters in the entire Bible. Jesus makes a very interesting statement in verse 63.

John 6:63 It is the spirit that quickens [or gives life], the flesh profits nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

Here is a very clear example of the figurative use of the word "spirit." Words are symbols that we use for communication. They are received into our mind through sight, as when reading, or sound, as when hearing, but once they are in the mind there is nothing material jammed into the brain. Do you get my point? There is nothing there! Those words, and thus the concepts they bring with them, are spirit because they are immaterial, invisible, and of considerable power depending upon what we use them for, and how we use them.

When we string words together, thoughts and concepts appear. From those thoughts actions occur, things are invented. It could even be a nuclear bomb, but that nuclear bomb in one sense owes its power to the fact that spirit (words) are in a man's mind, and he is able to put all

the concepts together and produce a bomb, or an automobile, or a house.

Spirit is power, and yet there is nothing there. Those words are spirit, and in many cases they are coming from a spirit being. In reality this is thought transference, because no sound is heard in our ears when a demon does it, or when another spirit being does it. Jesus was not spirit. He used words, but a spirit being can transfer his thoughts into our mind, whether God, Jesus Christ, an angel, or a demon, and we would not even be aware.

We are going to look at Matthew 10:16-20. Here is an interesting example of thought transference.

Matthew 10:16-20 Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be you therefore wise as servants, and harmless as doves. But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you.

Now get a picture of this circumstance that Jesus is talking about here, where one of us might be in the presence of persecution. I do not think God is going to announce: "This is God speaking through so-and-so." Rather, on the surface it will appear to those listening, as well as the person speaking, that everything is being generated from the one being persecuted. But a thought transference has occurred between God and His child.

Let us look at another one from the Old Testament in I Kings 22. Here we get insight into a council that God was holding up in heaven. God's prophet Micaiah was given the ability to see and hear what was going on, and here is what Micaiah reported.

I Kings 22:20-22 And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. [These are demons saying this and that.] And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him. And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? [How?] And he said, I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And He [God] said, You shall persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.

Let us draw a picture of that when it actually occurred. The demon did not suddenly appear, walking up to Ahab's false prophets saying: "I am going to tell lies through you so Ahab can be lured into battle and lose his life." No. The demon remained invisible, transferring his thoughts into the false prophets' minds.

Now to all concerned, during any meetings held to counsel Ahab, it appeared to human eyes

and ears that the lying counsel was generated solely from Ahab's prophets. There is no indication anywhere in the Bible that the ministers or the prophets deliberately conspired to deceive Ahab. At the same time the prophets themselves were unaware that they were being used in that manner. However, God's Word reveals that all of the counselors had unseen and unheard communication from a single invisible demon. Some of this stuff is pretty scary to realize how vulnerable a human being is.

Let us go to a more familiar one in Matthew 16. I think this series of verses was used two or three times during the Feast, but I am going to use them again.

Matthew 16:21-22 From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go unto Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto You!

Peter was forceful in doing this. I get the picture of Peter reaching out and grabbing hold of Jesus, maybe even turning Him part way around, and began to rebuke Him with a pretty strong saying: "Be it far from you, Lord: this shall not be unto you."

Matthew 16:23 But He [Jesus] turned, and said unto Peter, Get you behind Me, Satan: you are an offense unto Me: for you savor not the things that be of God, but these that be of men.

Anybody standing to one side, watching what was going on, would see that Peter did the speaking. But Jesus spoke directly to Satan who was nowhere in sight to those who would be looking on, and thus attributing to Satan the source of Peter's outburst that was against God's will that Jesus suffer and die. Without Peter (who was someone pretty close to Christ) even recognizing it, he permitted himself to be a willing conduit for Satan's will. Peter's good intention was against God's will, and thus judged by Jesus as evil.

I think you can begin to get the drift of things here that we are going to have to have some measure of defense against this and an awareness of the possibilities that we could be used even as Peter was used, and that we could be used even as the counselors to Ahab were used. Is it possible that we have already been used? I would have to conclude that every single one of us has already been used. It would be actually a miracle if we were not. We may not have been used directly, but most certainly indirectly.

The possibility is there that we have been directly used in some outburst that was against God's will. That outburst could have been words communicated to us, or an action that we were inspired to do, or an attitude we were inspired to have that maybe we held in check and did not do, but might have been just on the cusp of doing when our defensive shield went up, and we rejected it.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein in time past you walked according to the

course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

In my Last Great Day sermon I spent a good bit of time defining the word "course." You will recall that this is the word "aeon" in Greek. I want to go back to recapture some of that because it is of utmost importance to our understanding a few words regarding how Satan communicates with us. If we cannot understand this, our chances of coming out of Babylon are decreased significantly. So again, "spirit" is the word used to indicate the invisible immaterial influence whose characteristics are absorbed and then manifested in the attitudes and conduct of the general population of any given people.

The word "course" is an influence that is much more visible. It can be compared to a path, to a riverbed or a highway. If one looks at the word "course" in *Roget's International Thesaurus* under the heading "Tendency," it has synonyms such as: thought, disposition, character, nature, makeup, bent, slant, frame of mind, inclination, drift, mindset, and perspective. "Course" is the whole mass of elements that make up the conduct and attitude of the times. It is a giant mix-master that results in a culture.

The course is not exactly the same all over the world, because its expression in people will differ depending on many factors; however, it does have at least one commonality all over the world. It will always be carnal. It will always be fleshly. ("Fleshly" is the Bible word.) It will always be evil because the spirit influencing it is always evil. The course of the world is not coming from God. This is the course of the world. The prepositional phrase "of the world" modifies "course."

It might be helpful to understand "course" by re-phrasing it into statements using some of the synonyms. For example, we could use the following: according to the disposition of the world. (That kind of indicates an attitude.); according to the character of this world; according to the nature of this world; according to the makeup of this world; according to the mindset, drift, perspective, slant, or frame of mind of the world.

Look at Ephesians 2:2 again. We could say: "Wherein in time past you [all of us] walked [conducted our life] according to the drift, the slant, the inclination, the character, etc., of the world, which is driven by the spirit who is prince of the power of the air." That is why it is always evil.

Every single one of us has been influenced. Nobody has escaped. Billions upon billions upon billions of people all through man's time on this earth have been influenced by this spirit being. Revelation 12:9 says that Satan has deceived the whole world for all time. Thus you can begin to understand this, I think, in a practical way of why the course is different, because somebody from France, or from Germany, or Saudi Arabia, or Iraq, though carnal and influenced by the same spirit, would not be as inclined to seeing, understanding, and reacting to a given situation exactly as an American. The specifics of what impacts on our mind will differ from nation to nation, thus giving us a personality of that nation, but it will always be evil.

Though all of the personalities of these nations I mentioned are *of* the world, the things that make up *their* course will impress themselves on those nationalities somewhat differently from what they do from other nations. Cartoonists make caricatures of national personalities, and

they take advantage of them to make us laugh, but it is the course of the world in their environment that makes such a thing possible.

The course of the world is that from which we must be converted. It is the unseen foundation of our pre-conversion attitudes and conduct and is the same thing still motivating us when we are acting carnally. Despite conversion, the course of the world remains within us, compressed like a spring ready to spring into action and reveal itself once again. Romans 7 fits right in here of Paul's complaint about sin that was in him.

One of its major characteristics exhibited worldwide, regardless of culture, is that it is habitually self-centered rather than God-centered. This is because of the underlying spirit beings that are at the heart and soul, and the key element of the communication of the course of this world into humanity.

I want to show you by a simple illustration, combined with the Bible, how it came to be this way. I want you to go all the way back to Genesis 1: 31. We are just about ready for the seventh day of the creation week.

Genesis 1:31 And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was *very good*. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day.

At this time God takes satisfaction in all that He had made, and that includes Adam and Eve and their nature because they were already created by the time this statement is made; thus at the beginning their nature is termed by our Creator as "very good." They were not created sinning. They were still *very good*.

Genesis 3 reveals the episode that began the transformation of their basic nature. Their nature was not created evil. It *became* evil through the influence of another spirit being besides God that they chose to follow on their own without any intervention from their Creator. Once they did, the course of this world began, and by the second generation murder occurred, and by the time of the flood men were evil continually. It is this same peak toward which evil is driving the world on its multiple courses to the end. Now a little conclusion: All of this evil takes place because of the communication of evil beings to human beings, and mankind does not even know.

Let me remind you again that Revelation 12: 9 says that Satan has deceived the whole world. If the deception is lifted, people know; but the world is deceived. They do not know that this communication is taking place. Brethren, what we see, and what we hear, and even what we do *not* see and what we do *not* hear can have a pretty big impact on our lives.

I want to pick up a Scripture in II Timothy 3.

II Timothy 3:13 But evil men and seducers shall wax [or grow] worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

The same process that ended with the Flood continues to this day as each of us is born into the world and then exposed to the same spirit and the variety of courses that influenced Adam and Eve and their progeny. All of us are born with a slight pull toward the self, but not with the evil

that develops and manifests itself in our conduct.

Contrary to what the Catholic church teaches, evil is not passed through procreation. It is passed on by the spirit of the age—the course of this evil world—into which each person is born. It is communicated to us primarily through the cultures we are born into, all of which are carnal to the core.

It is the converted parents' responsibility to God and to their children to ensure that the right Spirit dominates their home so that the children can be properly nurtured. People understand this to some degree when they observe with maxims such as, "The apple does not fall very far from the tree," or "Like father, like son," or "Like mother, like daughter."

This world's Christianity, in its effort to avoid responsibility for the evil in them, has instead blamed God for creating us this way. God is indeed responsible to some degree in that He has not chosen to stop Satan's deceptions yet. He is permitting it to go on. But God did not *make* us this way, and we are not *born* this way. You will never see innocence like a baby has, but it does not take very long for Satan and his horde of demons, and in far too many cases, with the cooperation of the parents, to begin to erode that beautiful innocence, and those beautiful babies turn into us.

God did not make us this way, and mankind, represented by Adam and Eve, *chose* to submit to Satan, and all of their descendants, including us, have chosen to become evil under the influence of the same evil spirit that offered Adam and Eve the choice. It is this that creates and accounts for the course of this world.

Earlier I read the Scripture that states that evil men shall grow worse and worse. Now how evil is this heart that has been so easily communicated to us? We are going to go to a Scripture that you know by heart. Let us look at it anyway.

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

Our basic carnal drive is incurable. Every once in a while we are asked whether it is possible that Satan might repent. The answer is, "Absolutely no!" based on the fact that our heart is a reflection of his heart which he has communicated to us. The *Revised Standard Version* translates this verse as: "The natural heart of man is desperately corrupt, incurably sick." It is so bad, so evil, that repairing it cannot salvage it. It must be completely replaced.

Let us continue to work toward understanding why coming out of Babylon is so important. It really is not all that hard to be deceived regarding the truly desperate condition of the heart; however, we tend to not judge our heart as thoroughly incurable as God does. Let us look at what God says and maybe we can be convinced a little bit further. We are going to turn to Luke 11:13. When we look at this in this manner, it is kind of shocking. Jesus is speaking, and He said:

Luke 11:13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?

I want you to consider this deeply, and meditate on it. Jesus flat out called those to whom He was speaking *evil*. These were just ordinary human beings, fellow countrymen of Jesus. There was nothing exceptional about them. They were just standing there listening to Him preach, and He called them evil. There is no equivocation. This word "evil" is synonymous with our English words diseased, hurtful, calamitous, derelict, vicious, and malignant. The Greek word is combined with the word "labor" (work) and indicates something that is worked at, thus producing these effects of the heart: disease, pain, calamity, and so forth.

Jesus Himself was called good, but He immediately corrected the one who called Him good by saying that there was none good but God. I think He said that because there were elements of human nature in Him because of His birth as a human. What we see here is God's assessment of human nature. It is incurable. It is evil. It cannot be changed.

Human nature has to be replaced, and thus within the context Jesus is saying that just because human nature knows how to and actually does some good things, maybe like acts of kindness, this does not alter the fact that it is still incurably evil. It is our pride that strongly tends to blunt God's assessment of our heart, and so our pride tends to rise to defend us from the condemnation of the standard that we are compared to: God Himself.

This may seem like a far-out example of how we compare, but let us consider Adolph Hitler for just a moment. He is judged by almost everybody in the world as someone who was thoroughly evil. However, it is claimed by his biographers who interviewed many people to write their works, that Hitler thoroughly loved children and dogs. Children and dogs is an interesting combination. It is interesting because neither one would hurt *him*. So we would tend to judge Adolph Hitler's loving of children and dogs as something like doing well. But let us continue God's assessment of human nature.

James 3:8-12 But the tongue can no man tame: it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. [Does not sound too good, does it?] Therewith bless we God, even the Father [Good things can come out of that tongue, but it is evil.]; and therewith curse we men [That is bad.], which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Does a fountain send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

People say that human nature is a mixture of good and evil, but brethren, as far as that being acceptable for living in the Kingdom of God, the human heart is evil. Is it going to be allowed to be part of the Kingdom of God? God is in the Kingdom of God. Is God contaminated by a mixture of good and evil? No way! According to I John 3:1-2, we shall be like Him, and if we are in the Kingdom of God we will not be contaminated by a mixture of good and evil. So before we go into the Kingdom of God the heart we now have has to be replaced with a different heart.

We are receiving plenty of information to understand that salvation absolutely must be by

grace. Human nature is a mixture that not only cannot be made good, but also that it is just under the surface barely covered over by our conversion, as Peter's outburst against God's will clearly teaches us.

We are going to go in a little bit different direction, but it is still connected to this thought. I am going to ask you to compare something and make a decision.

Philippians 2:12-13 Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

We are going to make a comparison here with another Scripture in the Old Testament. Turn to Deuteronomy 5. This is the second giving of the Ten Commandments. Verse 29 appears right at the end of His giving those commandments. Listen to what God says after giving them the commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:29 O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!

Here comes the question. We just read Philippians 2:13 where it says "For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." In Deuteronomy 5:29 God laments: "O that there were such an heart in them." Which of these two—the will or the heart—is more important to growth and conversion and coming out of Babylon?

Now a couple of more questions on this same subject. Which of these two—the will or the heart—is subject to the other? Is the will a self-determining agent, or is it determined by something else? Is the will superior to every other faculty in the body? Is the will sovereign or servant? Does it govern, or is it subject to the pleasure of other faculties?

One of the reasons I ask all these questions is because many, and in fact I think most who consider themselves as Christian, believe that because free moral agency exists that it is the will that is the more important of the two. In fact, human philosophies insist that it is the will that governs the man; but that cannot be, as we shall see. Contrariwise, the Word of God teaches that it is the heart, (or if you prefer, the mind) which is the dominating factor at the center of our being.

Now here is a circumstance that each one of us faces perhaps many times in any given day. Suppose a person has set before him two alternatives. Which will he choose? I am not giving you any alternatives. I am just asking the basic question. If a person has two alternatives from which to choose, which one will he choose? The answer is, the one that is most agreeable to him; that is, agreeable to his heart—his innermost being.

Let us put this choice between moral or immoral alternatives. If the person is what the Bible calls a sinner, and he is given the choice between godliness and sinful indulgence, which will he

follow? Well, he will follow the latter. Why? Because he prefers it—all arguments to the contrary notwithstanding. Now *why* will the sinner choose the self-indulgence? Because his heart is sinful.

If you present a truly converted person with the same option, which will *he* choose? He will choose a life of piety and virtue. Now *why*? Because God has given him a new heart—a *NEW* heart.

The fact is that the sinner is impervious to all appeals through the Gospel to forsake his way; he will not change because of his corrupt and sinful heart. The sinner will not come to Christ and keep the Sabbath and the holy days, or quit stealing from God or from other people, or quit lying, quit lusting, quit "you name it," because he does not want to. He has a heart that hates Jesus Christ, and loves sin. You might grimace, but I am going to prove this to you. .

Romans 8:7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

The carnal mind, the carnal heart—the one that is following the course of the world—is at *war* with God.

The human will is the faculty of choice, but it is every bit as much subject to the mind as the hand, the feet, the eyes, or the sexual organs. It is the servant of the mind, and the mind in turn is affected by various influences brought to bear on through the concerns and the course of life.

We are going to leave the New Testament and go back to the Old Testament to the book of Proverbs to about as clear of a statement of this as can possibly be given.

Proverbs 4:23 Keep [guard] your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

It is the heart, brethren, that determines one's preferences and inclination, and therefore one's choices, thus subjecting the will to *it*. It is because of this that understanding the evil that has been communicated to us by Satan and his demons, either directly or through the course of this world, is so important because the world has shaped our pre-conversion heart. As we carry this on we are going to take a look at how this affects our relationship with God. We are going to begin with a very basic scripture.

John 6:44 No man [no one—man or woman] can come to Me except the Father which has sent Me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.

Please pay attention to the words "No one can come to Me" and "except the Father draw him." We are going to see how powerful the will is compared to the heart. It is puny and weak in terms of determining what we do. This statement by Jesus shows how very limiting mankind or God is regarding who can be converted. Only those the Father selects and draws may be

converted.

Without saying it directly, it is implying that men *will not* come to Him unless drawn. Please let that sink in, because it is telling us how wicked, how evil, how at war with God the human heart is. It *will not* come to God. Is Jesus lying when He says "No man [no one] can come to Me unless the Father draws him."? He means it! *NOBODY*, including you and me. We do not come to God out of the goodness of our heart. We do not volunteer until God first calls us and presents us with the choice. Mankind does not like to hear this because it is condemning his evil heart.

People like to think that by nature they love God. Oh no they do not! Satan has taken care of that through his evil spirit. Through the course of the world he has so deceived us. We say we love God, and God says we are evil. God says "Nobody can come to Me unless *lcall* him." Who is right? God or man?

Romans 3:9-11 What then? Are we [Israelites] better than they [the Gentiles]? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin: As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one. [Is God telling a big whopper there? God does not lie.] There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God.

This is Scripture! It is the Word of truth. That is how evil the heart is that Satan has deceived. In our pride we think it is pretty good just because it can do some kind things. Oh, no. It is not good.

Let us look at the book of John again. Here Jesus was right in the midst of these people, and He said:

John 5:39-40 Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me. And you will *not* come to me, that you might have life.

Here people had God in the flesh right in their midst, and they would not choose to follow Him.

John 15:18 If the world hate you, you know that it hated me before it hated you.

That is kind of scary. Just because we are associated with Christ, some of that hatred flows over to us.

Some people though did choose to follow Christ, but there is a very revealing statement regarding those who did do that.

John 1:12-13 But as many as received Him [Those who chose to

follow Him], to them gave He power [light, or authority] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

It was God's will that they followed Jesus. He is the One who is working both to will and to do. Only because God selected these people to be called did they have the inclination to follow Jesus because of something *He* did to their heart.

Let us go to Jeremiah 31 so we can see what is happening here.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in that day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

What we have here is the promise of a New Covenant, distinctly different in one regard from the Old Covenant, carrying the same laws, but at the same time carrying the promise of that law being written in our heart.

Ezekiel prophesied a few years after Jeremiah, and God opened up the promise a little bit further, clarifying something in Ezekiel 36.

Ezekiel 36:24-28 For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. 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 a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and *cause* you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. And you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers: and you shall be my people and I will be your God.

The beginning of the fulfillment of these two promises in our lives is what makes all the

difference in the world in regard to the use of the will. We have been given as forerunners of what we have just read in Jeremiah 31 and in Ezekiel 36, as God begins to lay the foundation for what is going to take place in the next major step in His plan. That step is the return of Jesus Christ and the beginning once again of the governance of the Kingdom of God on earth. He is preparing a people to work with Him under His Son Jesus Christ in the administration of that government, and so God has begun to fulfill that promise even before these things actually occur to the entire nation.

We have a new heart as a gift from God—a heart that does not hate God. The proof that the hatred has been removed is that one who has received the benefit will consistently make use of his will by choosing to obey God's will as expressed in His law. The new heart and submission to God's will go hand in hand.

Let us add one final vital piece of information out of I Corinthians 4. I know that Paul wrote this in order that he might help to put our attitude in the right trajectory.

I Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you to differ from another?

How are we different from the man out on the street? Humanly, there is no difference at all. We are just human beings, so the inference is that it is God who made us different. Remember, Paul is writing to church members here, and he is writing to a congregation in which there were a multitude of attitude problems.

I Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you to differ from another? And what have you that you did not receive? Now if you did receive it, why do you glory, as if you had not received it?

Why do you take such pride in yourself when that heart that you have been given that makes you different from the man in the street has been given to you as a gift from God? We have absolutely nothing to be proud about in this regard, because we can only obey God because He is keeping His promises, and because He has drawn us to Him and to Jesus Christ. It has not been given to us because of anything we have done. It has been purely an act of mercy on God's part. Remember what Paul wrote. "It is not of him that wills, or of him that runs, but of God that shows mercy." That is what has happened, and that is what Paul is talking about in this verse.

What we have received is a gift of grace, unearned in any way. Please understand that the man-on-the-street's free will is free *only* in that God never forces anybody to sin. He did not force Adam and Eve to sin. Is that not clear? He just gave them the choice. They *chose* the course of the world. Everybody else does the same thing, and so our will is free only to the extent that God does not force us.

But the sinner is not free to do either good or evil, because an evil heart absorbed from Satan's dominion is ever inclining him to sin. It is only *the called* of God who are truly free to exercise their will to choose the good because of God's gift. This does not merely counter-balance the evil heart instilled from Satan's world, but can thoroughly dominate human nature, because God

works in us both to will and to do.

Did you understand what I just said? God frees us from the bondage to Satan and to sin. The gift He has given us will enable us to *dominate* human nature because that heart He has given us as a free gift has all the power of God behind it. He backs up His children, so the exercise of this will, motivated by the heart given of God, will enable us to flee Babylon. It will not only enable us to resist Babylon, it will also enable us to be able to perceive between evil and good and make the right choice.

We have been gifted with something that very few people on this earth now possess: a heart given by God to enable us to obey Him. So let us be about our Father's business.