

**LOCATING THE CAUSE OF OUR TROUBLE**

H. S. Dow

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

The prophet Jeremiah in this chapter has laid some very serious charges against Judah and Israel, God's ancient people, and had pronounced some severe judgments of God upon them. He charged them with telling lies about God, saying that he had told them to do certain things wherein was no profit, when he had not spoken; they also were making their own gods and worshipping them: and were taking advice from man and trusting in him rather than God. For these things and many others the prophet pronounced the curse of God upon them, and said they had kindled a fire in God's anger, and he would drive them out of their own land, from the heritage he had given them—and they would serve their enemies because they had departed from the Lord. In the words of the text he locates the cause of their trouble—he said it was in their hearts.

We have made some progress toward recovery when we have located our trouble, whether it is trouble with out automobile, a machine or an animal on the farm, or a physical trouble of our own. When the doctor is called to the bed-side of a sick man, the first thing he will try to do is to locate the cause of the patient's illness, before he prescribes a remedy.

When God deals with men, as He does in His Word in reference to their sins, or shortcomings, or mistakes, He quite often is very specific in pointing out the cause of their failure. In Isaiah's criticism of the failures of God's ancient people he tells them that "the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint—and there is no soundness in it, etc." Then he prescribes a remedy. "Wash you, make you clean, etc." This trouble that Jeremiah speaks of, viz, a deceitful heart, is a very common one indeed. Notice he says the heart is "deceitful above all things." We can think of some very deceitful things in various phases of life among people and things that we have to do with. But the inspired prophet says that the human heart is the worst: He says it is "deceitful above all things." It is so deceitful that it not only tries to deceive other people but it deceives ourselves. The apostle Paul in writing to the church at Corinth says, "let no man deceive himself."

The reason for this self deception I presume is that we are more lenient with ourselves than we are with other people, hence, we will often excuse things in ourselves which we would condemn others for doing. We have one standard for ourselves and another for our fellowman, whereas God has one standard for all men who have equal light and privileges. God's requirements for getting saved are laid down in His Word. Here are some of them: "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," John 3:3. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness without which no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12:14. "As he which hath called you is holy so be ye holy in all manner of conversation," 1 Peter 1:15. "Thou shalt love the Lord with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself," Matt. 22:37.

Of course when God speaks of the heart being deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, He is speaking of the depraved, unwashed, unsanctified heart: and this doubtless is, and always has been the source from which most of the troubles of this world have come.

International and civil wars, strife, and bloodshed, troubles, and wretchedness in communities, divisions, gossip, and backbiting in churches and homes, are the outcome of the unregenerated and unsanctified hearts. Is that not what the apostle James says? "From whence cometh wars and fightings among you? Come they not, even of your lusts that war in your members?" (hearts) And furthermore he declares this condition is "earthly, sensual, devilish," James 5. But, observation and experience has taught us that some people who profess to have much grace are sometimes self-deceived. Some of those who profess to be workers in the vineyard of God, do things which hinder rather than help in the promotion of the Gospel. Of course we say that they make mistakes when they do such things, but they themselves will rarely admit it: for as some one has said, three of the hardest words in the English language to say are, "I WAS WRONG."

The reason that many good people do make mistakes we think, is because they follow the leadings of their own spirit, rather than being led by the Holy Spirit. Our own spirit is always seeking our own interests, it may be financial interests, or social welfare, or the praise of men, that some are seeking, while the Holy Spirit is always seeking the welfare of all men, the salvation of souls, and the glory of God, and if we follow Him he will lead us accordingly. And has not God said—"The meek will He guide in judgment, the meek will He teach His way"? Psalm 25:9. Then why do men make mistakes? I think it is because they often are in too great a hurry to do the thing which they think is right, and instead of taking time to wait upon God in prayer and meditation to be sure that they are being led by Him, they lean to their own understanding and rush in and say or do the thing which afterwards proves to be a hindrance to the cause of Christ and the work has suffered a loss.

We know the world says, "hurry! you will have to be up and doing if you succeed." But when a voice talks like that, you can be quite sure that it is not God's voice, for He says in His Word: "He that believeth shall not make haste," Isa. 28:16; and, "they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength," Isa. 40:31. So, it seems that hearts of good men are sometimes deceitful, and the prophet asks in the words of our text, "Who can know it?" We would answer, God can, and does know what is in our hearts, and if we would wait upon Him, and pray the prayer of the Psalmist, "Search me oh God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Psm. 139:23, we might have less to regret. Let us pray.

**A PLEA FOR UNITY**

R. B. Warren

In the beginning of the Christian church there were occasions of discord. And so it has continued. There are times when differing from others is justified. When Peter came to Antioch Paul withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. He wrote, "I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel." Gal. 2:14. If Paul had acquiesced in their error there would have been a most serious cleavage in the church, with the Jewish Christians on the one hand and the Gentile Christians on the other. Paul's differing from Peter saved the day.

But more of the occasions of disunity spring from envy or other sinful disposition. Too many walk according to the flesh and not according to the Spirit of God. For this condition described in First Corinthians, the third chapter, the great cure is presented in the thirteenth chapter . . . namely, the pursuit of love. The possession of this love which is from God and is like God will help us to be patient in disappointment. Love does not insist on its own way. It gives us a breadth of sympathy and understanding which even education does not give. To help toward greater unity in the church and among the peoples of the world let us seek more love; for love is of God.

**THE SIN OF OMISSION**

Margaret E. Sangster

It isn't the thing you do, dear,

It's the thing you leave undone

That gives you a bit of heartache

At setting of the sun.

The tender word forgotten;

The letter you did not write;

The flowers you did not send, dear,

Are your haunting ghosts at night.

The stone you might have lifted

Out of a brother's way;

The bit of heartsome counsel

You were hurried too much to say;

The loving touch of the hand, dear,

The gentle winning tone

Which you had no time nor thought for

With troubles enough of your own.

Those little acts of kindness

So easily out of mind,

Those chances to be angels

Which we poor mortals find—

They come in night and silence,

Each sad, reproachful wraith,

When hope is faint and flagging

And a chill has fallen on faith.

For life is all too short, dear,

And sorrow is all too great,

To suffer our slow compassion

That tarries until too late;

And it isn't the thing you do, dear,

It's the thing you leave undone

Which gives you a bit of a heartache

At the setting of the sun.

**WHERE DID CAIN GET HIS WIFE?**

This question was asked in the Highway November 30. Believers of the Bible have pondered over it helplessly, and even ministers unable to answer it have yielded a seeming victory to sceptics who have asked it. The supposed difficulty is that Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel, and that when Cain killed Abel he was the only child left. Yet as an exile in the land of Nod he has a wife. Where did she come from? Gen. 5:3 and 5:4 tells us that at the age of one hundred and thirty years Adam begat a son named Seth, and that after that he lived eight hundred years, and begat sons and daughters. So doubtless Adam and Eve had a very large family of both sexes. Adam's sons could marry sisters, cousins or nieces. Cain being the oldest doubtless married one of his sisters. In no other way could the race be multiplied from a single pair. Is it not regrettable that any minister or mature Christian should be unable to give the scriptural answer to that easy question?

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