



The Dilemma of the Evil Within

Mark 7:14-23

The Lord Jesus is the Great Physician of souls, who perfectly diagnoses man's inner problem: "For **from within**, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, **wickedness...All these evil things come from within**, and defile the man" (*Mark 7:21-23*).

Many teach that within every person there resides a certain amount of goodness; sometimes referred to it as "a spark of divinity." Paul knew better, "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth **no good thing**" (*Rom. 7:18*).

People do not perform good deeds because of inner goodness; rather, they do good in spite of being innately evil. Our Lord taught that evil men can do good things (on a human level): "If ye then, **being evil**, know how to give good gifts unto your children..." (*Matt. 7:11*). It's possible for evil men to be relatively good parents.

Depraved men can be morally upright in many ways. Unregenerate people can have a love for country, can agree with most Judeo-Christian values, can be good citizens and can embrace sound conservative principles. Yet none of these things can change or correct man's innermost heart problem.

When an evil man does a good act, it is not credited as righteous before God: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an **abomination** to the LORD: but the prayer of the upright is His delight" (*Prov. 15:8*). God cannot accept the sacrifice or the prayer of a man whose heart is evil, and even "the plowing of the wicked [an activity usually considered useful and amoral] is sin" (*Prov. 21:4*).

Man's dilemma is that God cannot accept an unclean heart and man cannot do anything to make it clean and right (*Rom. 8:8*). God's solution is found only at Calvary, and absolute righteousness is only found in Christ (*Rom. 8:1-4; 2 Cor. 5:21*).

~George Zeller: www.middletonbiblechurch.org



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