

Thoughts and Their Fruit

by C.H. Spurgeon

C.H. Spurgeon teaches that while human thoughts may seem free before men, they are fully accountable before God, and the fruit of evil thoughts leads to sin and divine judgment.

Scripture: Jeremiah 6:19, Psalm 139:2, Genesis 6:5-6, Exodus 20, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 5:28

Topics: "Divine Judgment", "The Ten Commandments"

Description

In this powerful teaching sermon, C.H. Spurgeon explores the profound spiritual truth that thoughts are not free before God and are subject to His judgment. Using the Ten Commandments as a framework, Spurgeon reveals how sinful thoughts lead to sin and grieve God's heart. He warns believers to guard their minds carefully, recognizing that thoughts are the fertile ground from which all sin grows. This sermon challenges listeners to examine their inner lives and pursue holiness in thought as well as deed.

Transcript

"The fruit of their thoughts." Jeremiah 6:19.

Do you observe here, my Brothers and Sisters, how God declares that He would not only punish Israel for gross overt acts of sin, but that He would also bring upon the nation terrible chastisements for their thoughts? A solemn warning, full of instruction to us.

It has almost passed into a proverb, that "thought is free." Whether this is true or false, an axiom or a gaffe, must depend on the sphere in which thought moves. It is true in the sense of thought being free before men, since none of us can judge our neighbor's thoughts, nor have we any right to attempt the task. Religious opinion, for instance, is not a thing of which the law can justly take cognizance. As far as the civil government is concerned, whether a man's sentiments are those of a Christian or an idolater, a Catholic, a Protestant, or a Mormon, he is entitled to all civil rights. Be he who he may, he is oppressed if he is deprived of his liberty, or of any privilege because of his thoughts! Be he who he may, he is injured if any one sect is rendered dominant, or is supported by a forced taxation drawn from the whole. Thought must be free and it shall be acknowledged, by God's help, perfectly free as between man and man! Whatever tyrants may decree, they have never yet been able to stop the progress of opinion! When they have used all their prisons and their racks, their dungeons and their blazing stakes, they have never been able to turn a sound man from a truth which he has embraced, nor, I may add, have they been able to confirm a wavering man in the lies which they have tried to thrust upon him. Thought, in that sense, is free by natural right.

Yet there is another side to the same question, by reason of which we are bound to make this solemn protest—thought is not free before God. I have no more authority to think of God as I please than I have to act before Him as I please! In either case, the charge of licentiousness would lie against me, for the God who is supreme over the outward actions of my body is likewise the only Lord and Governor of the inward motions of my spirit. All the provinces of the little isle of man's soul belong to God, the Great Governor. Over body, soul and spirit He is Legislator and Lord!

That thought in this sense is not free is to be proved very clearly, for some of the Commandments of God contained in the Decalogue particularly relate to thought. Such, for instance, "You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife," and so on. That Commandment is clearly, particularly and peculiarly one relating to thought. God's Law, therefore, takes cognizance of thought. Moreover, we know that God has told us, as we read in the 139th Psalm, that He is constantly watching our thoughts. He knows them before they are known to us—"You understand my thought afar off." To what end, do you think, does God watch our thoughts but with this view—to bring us into judgment at the Last Great Day for every idle word and for every idle imagination and thought of our hearts? And, my Brothers and Sisters, we have it upon record that God not only puts His Law to work on our thoughts, and watches our thoughts, but that He is also angry on account of evil thoughts. Remember what we read in Genesis 6:5, 6— "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. And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart." Do not, therefore, make light of evil thoughts! If your conscience is awakened, truly awakened, you never will. A steeled and seared conscience may look upon them with indifference—those whose hearts are not right toward God may sneer at the idea of any evil consequences coming from what they simply turn over in their minds—but if you have a tender heart, if God has been pleased to take the callousness from off your conscience, and to make it sensitive, you will say at once, "Oh, save my soul from base and wicked thoughts!"

That thoughts are of the utmost importance may likewise be inferred from the fact that God makes them here the ground of punishing His people. He speaks of "the fruit of their thoughts." The thought in itself may not be a very great thing, but what will it come to? It may even be a very little thing, but what will be the end of it? Thoughts of evil are in themselves evil thoughts! It is questionable whether we can even read the report of our neighbor's sin without producing some sinful thoughts in ourselves. It is debatable whether a person can have much to do with speaking or hearing of the offenses of others without in some degree defiling himself, for as pitch sticks, and soot and things black and dirty defile one by the slightest contact, so does sin in any shape passing over the mind! Touched by the hand, it might scarcely leave any discernible mark behind, but there is a distinct impression left upon the mind, so that every picture of evil which passes through the soul remains there to do that soul injury. The thought of evil is in itself sin.

And what is more, the thought of evil paralyzes the finer faculties of the soul. The more we think of sin and become familiar with it, the less terrible does it become to our apprehension. I am sure this is the result where men habituate their reveries with any form of evil. Could the minds of men who have become murderers be analyzed, I doubt not it would be found that they had been a long time in schooling themselves to the commission of the horrible crime. They have thought upon it, meditated and deliberated about it until, at last, it has seemed to them but a mere trifle—and then they have gone forth to do it without misgiving. I do not believe that a man becomes a villain all at once. He puts his soul to school—his thoughts are his teachers—or, rather, they are the schoolbooks in which his soul reads and, at last, he becomes capable of transacting the deeds of a scoundrel. If you think long upon any sin, the probability is

that as soon as the temptation to that sin comes, you will commit it.

I have known persons produce a pathological obsession by constant brooding. I knew a man, once, who was constantly apprehensive that he was being poisoned by people—and I always stood in trepidation for that man lest he should poison himself! If you will harbor the evil thought—if you will ponder on any sin, turn it over and talk with it on your pillow, your familiarity will disarm your fear and the traitor you have harbored will betray you before your suspicions are awakened! Beware, then, of all thoughts of sin! If you show a thief all the locks, bolts and bars in your house— and tell him how the cellar window could be opened, or the backdoor lock be made to give way—do not be surprised if one of these nights you should find all your goods stolen! If you do this and introduce these evil things into your habitation, you cannot wonder at the consequence, however startled your friends may be at the detection!

It is certain that thoughts are the eggs of sin. These are the embryo out of which sins spring—the spawn from which every form of iniquity is developed. We sometimes hear of fever lairs and of pest dens—evil thoughts are just like these. They are the jungles where the monsters of sin fatten and grow. Thoughts of sin are the dark woods that harbor all sorts of evil—they are the evil birds of prey that destroy all sorts of good!

Therefore, as God takes cognizance of our thoughts, let us be mindful of the responsibility they entail upon us. Let us no longer despise them, but look into the nursery where they are reared and begin to search our hearts—and to judge ourselves as in the sight of Him who searches all hearts.

I. BAD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT EXHIBIT A VERY LARGE VARIETY. I shall, however, but refer you to the 20th Chapter of the Book of Exodus, where the Ten Commandments will help us to a list of thoughts, all of which are horribly mischievous.

The First Commandment God gives to us is, "You shall have no other gods before Me. " That is, in fact, "You shall have no other god but Me, " since God is everywhere. This precept is easily broken in our thoughts. If I say to myself, "This is God's Law, but the contrary action will be most to my profit," then I make myself, or my money, my god. If on any occasion I say within myself, "I clearly perceive that I ought not to indulge in that sin, but then it will give me great pleasure"—should I indulge in it, then I make my pleasure, that is to say, myself, my god—I worship myself instead of God! This is a sin, the essence of which must lie in the thoughts, in the judgment, in the affections. You need not make an image of gold, or of wood and bow down before it—you can become a thorough-paced idolater in the temple of your heart by offering homage to your own self-will!

The Second Commandment contains a further prohibition, "You shall not make unto you any graven image, "and so on. That is, "You shall not worship God under any symbol—you shall not worship God through any symbol," or, in spirit, "You shall not worship God in any way which God has not commanded." "You shall not invent to yourself methods and modes of worship, but you shall do as God commands you." Now, we can very easily, in our thoughts, fabri-

cate an image. This is what most of us do. We say and think that God is altogether such an one as we are and, having formed to ourselves an idea of God, we bow down before it and say, "These are your gods, O Israel!" Brothers and Sisters, you may be idolaters as much by worshipping a god whom your fancy has made as by worshipping a block of stone! That Incomprehensible One who has proclaimed Himself in Scripture according to the mysterious attributes of His Being, and has further revealed Himself so sweetly and gloriously in the Person of the Lord Jesus—this is the God we must worship! We must not make a

god, but take the God whom the Scripture reveals! We are not to fashion in our thoughts a god such as we should like him to be—a god who is pure benevolence, but who has no justice—but we must take the God of Scripture—grandly stern, severely dreadful in His wrath while He is unbounded in His compassion and is always gracious and full of mercy! We must acknowledge the God of the Bible and not make a deity to ourselves, or else in our thoughts we have broken the Divine Law and the fruit of that thought will be that we shall be idolaters and sin will be laid at our door!

The Third Commandment, as you will clearly perceive, can be broken without saying a word—"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." Light thoughts of God, irreverence of soul towards Him is a violation of the solemn interdict. You have but to think lightly of His name and you have blasphemed it! Before your mouth has been opened to utter the rash expression, the rebellious thought is a profanation of the Most High.

As for the Law of the Sabbath in the Fourth Commandment which binds our race, that is readily enough violated by us all. Do not suppose that you are a keeper of the Sabbath because you do no work with your hands—you are just as guilty if you work with your brain! You are to rest on that day from all your own works. Do as much as you please for God on that day, but your mind should lay aside its care. You must not bring your shop here—you might almost as well stay at home and carry on your trade. You must not bring your burden in here! No, my Brothers and Sisters, leave that at the door and ask God's Grace that you may rise this day from all these things and give your heart and mind entirely to the worship of Him who has sanctified the day unto Himself. You see, then, that this Commandment may readily be broken without any overt act—and the breach destroys the validity of the Sabbath to you. It yields you no comfortable rest while your mind is toiling, tugging and straining about a thousand troubles and difficulties! But if you kept the Commandment in your spirit, it would be a sweet and blessed rest to you.

We turn now to the second table, the Commandments which relate to men. "Honor your father and your mother." Ah, when we were children and since then, unkind and unhallowed thoughts of our parents have been quite sufficient to convict us of offenses against the Law. Without a disobedient action, without a rebellious word, the child may in thought be a rebel to his parents.

"You shall not kill " But Christ tells us that he that is angry with his brother without a cause is virtually a murderer! So that thought can slay and kill and, indeed, it is the angry thought that lays the foundation of the deadly stroke! There would be no murdering and slaying if there were no enmity. Men would not march to slay each other, surely, or waylay their hapless victims and do desperate deeds of violence unless, first of all, their souls were set on the fire of Hell.

"You shall not commit adultery." Little will I say on this Commandment, but here is our Lord's own exposition of it, "Whoever looks on a woman to lust after her has committed adultery with her already in his heart." Fornication may thus abound in us to our defilement—and our souls' ruin—even though we may still be kept back by fear, perhaps, from the commission of the evil deed. Beware, then, you who can gloat over evil, you who can suck the forbidden sweet behind the door, you who can roll the sweet morsel under your tongue—beware lest you shall have your portion with those who fall into the sin! I say not that the thought of the sin is as bad as the sin, itself—it cannot be so, certainly, in its result to others—but it is still a sin—and a sin to be answered for in that tremendous Day when the Judge of all the earth shall allot their portions unto men!

"You shall not steal "Every envious thought of another man, every desire to possess myself of what is not mine. Everything of this sort, in which I would grasp that which does not belong to me, is a constructive theft! The thief does not so much steal when he puts out his hand to take his neighbor's purse, as in the thought which led him to do it, for the hand may sometimes take the purse without offense—it may be to protect the property of one who is disabled and incapable of guarding it himself. Such a thing is supposable—that one man might legitimately take another's purse and have a right to do so. It is not the act, but the motive when he deliberately ventures to take that which is not his own and would possess himself of his neighbor's goods to his neighbor's injury—this constitutes the very virus and soul of the theft. "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor "If I think harshly of my neighbor without a cause. If I conceive an unjust prejudice against him. If I look coldly upon him when he really does not deserve it. If I make up my mind out of some whim or fancy that he is a bad fellow, and shrug my shoulders, and I know not what, besides—though I have never said a word—yet still in thought I have injured my neighbor! Above all things, Brothers and Sisters, avoid that shoulder-shrugging—it is an abomination! We sometimes see it in company. Ah, they will not dare to say what it means, the cowards! You might suppose that the man against whom it is directed had killed his mother if you liked, for you are sure to suppose the worst. Be brave enough, if it must be spoken, to speak it! And if it must not be spoken, well then, do not say it in that mysterious language which may ruin a man in the estimation of others. Avoid any false witnessing in your thoughts and you will not bear it in your words.

To the last precept of the catalog I have already referred. It is especially a thought-command—"You shall not covet." All greedy desires which make us wish to get our neighbor's goods to the injury of others, are sins—and the fruits of such thoughts are guilt, punishment and the wrath to come!

Let me now conduct you a step further to another set of evil thoughts which could not be very easily comprised in the Decalogue.

There are self-righteous thoughts—the supposition that we are not as sinful as God says we are! The conceit that we may, perhaps, work ourselves out of our difficulties and force our way to Heaven! Now, the fruit of such a thought as this will be amazement in the day when God will strip us of our self-righteousness and make us stand naked to our eternal shame! Beware of self-righteous thoughts, my Hearers! They are the Tarpeian Rock from which Satan has hurled thousands of souls! It were better for you that a millstone were fasten about your neck and that you were cast into the midst of the sea, than that you should thank God that you are not as other men when, after all, you are as corrupt as other men and will perish as they do! Self-righteousness keeps you from coming to Christ and certainly it excludes you from eternal life and will close the gates of Heaven against you. God deliver us from the fruit of such thoughts!

Then, again, proud, boastful, vainglorious self-seeking thoughts are, alike, obnoxious. How highly some people think of themselves! You can see it in their gait and their speech betrays them. Yet their wine is all froth and their gold is all counterfeit. Their speech, when they begin to tell of what they have, and what they can do, and what they diddo upon such-and-such occasion—all this is an abomination to honest men—and their thoughts must be very abominable to God! It is one of the things which He says He hates—a proud look. God grant us Grace to be rid of every proud thought, for we have nothing to be proud of! A proud man is nothing but a windbag and when either the ills of life, or the crisis of death shall put a pin into it, what a collapse there will be! How the haughty one will discover himself to be nothing but emptiness and vanity! Get rid of proud thoughts, for oh, what will they do? Pride dragged an angel from Heaven and made a devil of him—and pride will drag any of us down to the level of the devil if we fall into

its snare.

Another still more common set of thoughts, but not much decried, are murmuring thoughts. Ah, me, how full some people are of these! They can hardly speak but what they have something to grumble about. Trade with them is always bad. Ever since I have been in London, trade has been bad, but it is even worse now! It never was so bad as it is now, except that it was just as bad last year and, as far as I know, has always been at the worst! Farmers never have, to the best of my recollection, had more than "an average crop." And most years there has been a failure. If the wheat has been good, the turnips have always gone bad, or something has! I notice murmuring to be a very common thing with many people—and you no sooner sit down in the cottage than, instead of telling you that someone has been there to help them a little, and give them some assistance—they say they have only the parish allowance—a miserable pittance! So it is—but they forget the mercies that they have. Why should I always be telling how often I have rheumatic pains and how many times I find that there is something wrong with my constitution? Why should I make it my constant habit to compel everybody to be miserable wherever I go? "Well," says one, "but you know we cannot help it!" My dear Friend, if you do not help it, then I will tell you what will be the fruit of it—you will make yourself incorrigibly miserable. You will bring yourself into a desperate state in which nothing will comfort you! I believe that in this respect, we are very much our own masters. Not all bounties of Providence can make us happy if we have a thankless, ungrateful heart! You may have all that the world can give you, and yet be wretched—or you may be very, very poor, and yet be cheerful! A thankful heart is the thing we need and, oh, may God be pleased to give us that thankful heart! But what I want you to remember is that murmuring is a great sin. They murmured against God in the wilderness and He sent fiery serpents among them. God

thinks much of our complaints against His Providential dealings with us—let us not think so little of the sin of provoking Him with our thoughts.

How prone we are likewise to cherish unbelieving thoughts! Oh, that we were all rid of these! But I suppose if I went round these galleries, I would find in every pew somebody who has unbelieving thoughts. We fancy that God will forsake us, that Providence will turn against us. We get like old Jacob when he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and you will take Benjamin away: all these things are against me." Whereas everything is working for us, only we cannot see it. Be gone, unbelief, for the fruit of unbelieving thoughts is weakness, sorrow, rebellion against God and I know not what else of rashness and presumption! God save us from these thoughts!

Procrastinating thoughts have been the fruitful source of mischief to full many of you. You have good thoughts and good resolves, but you always put things off and think that better times will come for leaving off your sins and seeking Christ! Even though the least evil would be a fearful waste of time—worse than which you run a perilous risk—it is yet to be dreaded that your souls will be lost at the last.

Others of us have to complain of wandering thoughts when we are worshipping God—and the fruit of these is to spoil the golden seasons which, well used, might yield great profit. Oftentimes, when the service has been fitted enough to minister refreshment and instruction—and others have been nourished by the Word—some poor soul goes out and says, "I have not enjoyed it at all." Why, of course not, for your thoughts have been elsewhere! These are the birds that come down upon the sacrifice. If, like Abraham, we drive them away, we shall be able to worship in peace. But if not, the fruit of wandering thoughts in the House of God is that the service is spoiled. So, too, in the closet, whether ostensibly engaged in private devotion, or the reading of Scripture—unless the thoughts are centered upon the subject in hand—there

can be no spiritual gain in drawing near unto God.

II. For a few minutes, now, let us think of brighter things while I mention A FEW GOOD THOUGHTS AND THEIR FRUIT.

"Of which," says an Apostle, "we cannot now speak particularly," when he had a long list and little space, so I must say now. If you would have good faith in your soul, cultivate humble thoughts. No man was ever injured by having too lowly a view of himself. The best definition of humility I ever heard was this—"to think light of ourselves." To think of ourselves as below the standard is lowliness—to think of ourselves as above the standard is pride. But to form a right estimation of ourselves is true humility! Avoid the counterfeit which is in the world—that is mock humility. Be truly humble. Have low thoughts of yourselves, especially before God! Penitent thoughts of sin, humble views with regard to Divine Grace and a close account of your own responsibility are indispensable—so, you will find that humility will sweep out the chamber of your soul and prepare it for the incoming of the Great Prince.

Cultivate very much forgiving thoughts towards your fellow men. Never be hard to be persuaded to pardon an offense. He that takes his brother by the throat will be sure to be taken by the throat himself. Evil for evil, it is said, is beast-like. Good for good is man-like. Evil for good is devil-like, but good for evil is God-like! Try to do it and if anything can make the bells ring in your heart, it will be to forgive one who has very greatly and wantonly injured you. The worse the offense, if you can overlook it, the greater will be your own joy and the better proof will you have that you are a child of God.

Go to bed each night and wake up each morning with admiring thoughts of God's goodness and with adoring thoughts towards God's greatness. You will find these thoughts to be like bees that will come home to you laden with honey. Let your soul be a hive of them! Worship the Lord. Think much of Him. Let every blessing you receive make you think of Him. Do not sit at the table and offer what we call, "Grace," because it is the custom to do so, but let your soul really see God's hand in the gift of everything that is on the table! We need not fear worldly thoughts if we were to sanctify those worldly thoughts. Said one, "The road on which I tread makes me think of Christ—the Way. The door through which I pass makes me think of Christ—the Door. I cannot handle money but what I think that I am not my own, but am bought with a price. I do not receipt a bill without recollecting that He has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against me. I cannot talk to my fellow man and receive his answer without thinking how I talk with God and how He answers me." In such manner, with many thoughts of God, you will find the fruit of heavenly-mindedness in your spirit. Angels will come and go to and fro between you and the courts of the Most High if you have many of these admiring and adoring thoughts of God!

Thankful thoughts are well deserving your high encouragement. Get a cage full of these birds of paradise and let them fly about in the groves of your soul and sing there at all times! Oh, there is no better companion than cheerful gratitude! If a man can but see the mercy of God in everything, instead of looking always at the black side of the picture, you will be happy, indeed! The fruit of thankful thoughts will be summer in your soul even when it is the depth of winter outside! Cultivate thankful thoughts as you cultivate sweet flowers in your garden!

Yet again, dear Friends, get many and abundant believing thoughts. When you cannot see your way, still trust in your Lord. Believe in Him. Though everything should give the lie to the promise, still believe the promise to be true.

Abound much in thoughts of submission to God. Every morning exercise such thoughts. Put your soul into God's hands that He may deal with you according to His will all the day. And each night, when you review the day, thank God for it all, whatever it may have been—knowing that it must be good—no, must be best if God has ordered it!

I will finally say, seek, Believer, to have many longing thoughts after Christ. Have longing thoughts to be with Him where He is! Let Christ have the best thoughts—the cream of them. Let Him have the first growth of your spirit. Be with Him in waking. Say to Him in the evening, "Abide with us, for the day is far spent." And if you lie awake at night, still seek to have some precious thought of Christ, like a wafer made with honey, to put under your tongue. Oh, we can bring Heaven down to earth if we can take our thoughts up to Heaven! If thoughts are the wings and the Spirit is the wind, we will fly away to the celestial Paradise!

Be much, then, in such thoughts as these, and may the fruit of your thoughts be such as God, Himself, may delight in, to Jesus Christ's praise! Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON: JEREMIAH 7:1-15; 17:1-14

Jeremiah 7:1-3. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD'S house and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place. Many of them thought that if they went up to the Temple, it was all right with them. If they did but go through the outward ritual, they would certainly be accepted. They must have been astonished when Jeremiah, the Weeping Prophet, met them at the Temple door and told them that the best worship of God was holiness—not the mere outward ceremony but the renewal of the life, the cleansing of the heart before Him.

4-7. Trust you not in lying words, saying The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD. The Temple of the LORD, are these. For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor; if you oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt: then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever. The blessing is not to the Temple and the Temple worshippers—the blessing is to holy men, to such as love righteousness, to such as obey the living God and do justice between man and man—and especially between themselves and the poor and needy of the earth. It is necessary to say this even now, for there are some who talk of being regenerated by baptism, of being saved by sacraments—they trust in their priests and rely upon their performances. "Trust you not in lying words"—that is the Scriptural description of all that kind of thing—just lying words and nothing better!

8-10. Behold, you trust in lying words that cannot profit Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom you know not; and come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Will you quote the very decree of God as an excuse for your sin? Will you make it out that even He is partaker in your criminality? That will never do! Only a lying heart could conceive of such an abomination!

11-16. Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, says the LORD. But go you now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel And now, because you have done

all the works, says the LORD, and I spoke unto you, rising up early and speaking, but you heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore will I do

unto this house, which is called by My name, wherein you trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your father, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of My sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to Me: for I will not hear you. You know how, through the sin of Eli's sons, God forsook Shiloh—and the tent of His House and the Ark of His Covenant were removed—and Shiloh became an utter desolation. So will God do to any Church that becomes unfaithful to Him! Go to Rome and see what she is today—mother of harlots, though once she seemed to be the chaste spouse of Christ. Her idolatries are as many as those of the heathen, for she forsook the Truth of God and turned aside from the Most High! Think not that God is tied to any place, or to any ministry. If we walk not before Him aright, He may take the candlestick out of its place! He may take the talent away and give it to others and then, "Ichabod," shall be written on the walls whether it is of Shiloh or of Jerusalem! Jeremiah has thus shown us clearly that no confidence can be placed in holy places or outward ceremonies—the state of the heart and the life is the all-important matter!

Jeremiah 17:1. The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron, and with the point of a diamond. [See Sermon #812, Volume

14—THE DEEP-SEATED CHARACTER OF SIN.] It is so ingrained in their

very nature that you might as well try to erase an inscription that is written upon steel with the point of a diamond as hope to get this perversity out of the nation! It is engraved upon the tablets of their heart. What is mere habit can be altered, but what is ingrained in the heart cannot be taken away except by a miracle of Grace! It was the heart that was wrong—the fountainhead was polluted—so what could the streams be, but foul?

1. It is engraved upon the table of their heart, and upon the horns of your altars; Their holiest things were defiled. They wrote up the names of their idol gods even upon God's altar and so they bore a written testimony against themselves!

2. While their children remember their altars and their groves by the green trees upon the high hills. God forbade the setting up of altars. There was one altar at Jerusalem and there were to be no more—but they selected spots where great trees had long grown—they chose the tops of the hills—and they built shrines for their idols there! And therefore God was angry with them. Oh, how readily we may turn anything into sin! How easily our choicest mercies may be made into occasions of iniquity!

3-8. O My mountain in the field, I will give your substance and all your treasures to the spoil, and your high places for sin, throughout all your border And you, even yourself, shall discontinue from your heritage that I gave you and I will cause you to serve your enemies in the land which you know not: for you have kindled a fire in My anger which shall burn forever Thus says the Lord, Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit. Oh, the blessedness of confidence in God! You see it here set out in contrast

with the misery of trusting in men! Drought comes even to this tree and times of trouble come to the Believer—but the drought does not affect the tree, for it has secret, underground sources from which it sucks up its life! It spreads out its roots by the river and blessed is that man who has a secret life, a secret strength, a secret comfort which sustains him in the trying hour! The world cannot perceive it, but he drinks it in and lives upon it.

9. The heart. That is the principal matter, it was the heart of the nation which had gone astray from God. "The heart—

9-11. Is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. As the partridge sits on eggs, and hatches them not; so he that gets riches, and is not right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool. The Prophet likens the man who gets riches by falsehood and oppression to a bird which has many eggs, too many for her to cover and, consequently, though she sits on them, there is such a heap of eggs that they are, none of them, hatched—they come to nothing. I think I know some men who are very much like that partridge. It would be a great mercy for them if they had only half of the eggs that they have, for all they get is the care and trouble of covering them, but no living joy comes out of them—the eggs are worthless. He that has not the Grace of God in his heart is just like a bird sitting upon worthless eggs. Poor soul! "At his end he shall be a fool." He must therefore be something of a fool, now, for he that pursues an end which shall end in folly is a fool to have such an end before him!

12-14. A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary. O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake You shall be ashamed and they that depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters. Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved: for You are

my praise. [See Sermon #1786, Volume 30—OUR SANCTUARY.]

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