

“A New Heart, a New Spirit, a New Life”—Ezekiel 18:30-32

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “A New Heart, a New Spirit, a New Life”, is Ezekiel 18:30-32 → *Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, declares the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Lord GOD; so turn, and live.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

What makes something new for you? While you may speak about purchasing a new house you may also define your concept of “new” by saying, “Well, it’s not brand new, but it’s new for us.” Interesting how something which is old becomes new.

Ever attended worship at another church? Did it feel new and maybe even more vibrant for you? It should at least feel new to you because it’s not your usual context for worship. After taking in a different preacher in a different style building with different worship leaders you may leave worship with a feeling of “renewal.” However, if you share your experience with a member of that congregation he may look at you kind

of funny, wondering if he was at the same service with you. Interesting how something which is the same old, same old can become new.

No doubt, in our lifetime there have been many changes with innovations in technology and inventions which are new . . . or at least different. But even the newness of these parts of our lives are fleeting because they too eventually become the same old, same old. Maybe that's why things can't just be new but must be "new **and improved?**" Maybe that's also why you are left speechless when someone greets you by saying, "What's new?"

God has His own dictionary and it's not called Merriam-Webster. He defines the concepts with which we function in our everyday lives much differently because He created us spiritual as well as physical beings. Only problem is, we lost the original righteousness with which He created us in the fall of Adam & Eve into sin. Through satanic delusion they choose to do something new—disobey God's command. Interesting how sin—as whole new concept in their lives—got old real fast as it messed up every area of their lives **and especially the eternal life for which God originally created them.** He had told Adam that if he broke His command, he would *surely die . . . in that very day* (cf. Genesis 2:17). Interestingly, Adam didn't drop over dead when he ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Genesis 3:6ff.). In fact, Genesis 5:5 tells us that *all the days that Adam lived were 930 years, and then*

he died.

Around 593 BC, Yahweh sent the prophet Ezekiel to His Old Testament Church (i.e. the people to whom He revealed Himself, redeemed by grace and sanctified to live in obedience to Him). Unfortunately the Church was corrupt, not so much in the sense of a corrupt system and leadership, but the corruption of people's hearts expressed in disobedience to His Word and will. At some point idolatry must have looked rather inviting, maybe even something "new" which they thought might "improved" their same old, same old worship of Yahweh. They continued making the choice to live in the same old life of unrepentant disobedience to God. Thus, His command to them in verse 31 of our text: *Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel?*

According to God's way of thinking they were actually the living dead, people living and functioning under God's grace and providence, even going through motions of worshiping Him, but spiritually *dead in trespasses and sins* (cf. Ephesians 2:1,5). Yahweh as their Creator, Father, Husband, Shepherd, and a host of other pictures He used to describe His love for them, was grieved over their sin. Why? Because His perfect justice demands that a price needs to be paid for disobedience and, as Romans 6:23 says, *the wages of sin is death*. According to God's

dictionary (i.e. the Holy Bible), Jesus described this death as eternal suffering in hell *where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched* (cf. Mark 9:48). One can see why God constantly strives to kill the heart bent totally on disobedience to His will with the desire to make it alive to Himself again (cf. Deuteronomy 32:39), and why Jesus gave His life to deliver you from such eternal death.

Thus, your old heart needs to be made new so you have *a new spirit*. This *new spirit* gives you a whole new perspective of life . . . and death—it's the Holy Spirit's perspective. This *new spirit* comes by repentance before your heavenly Father to be given new life in His complete forgiveness of your sins. Since He remembers your sins no more (cf. Isaiah 43:25), this *new spirit* does not accept the same old, same old disobedience to God's law as a way of life but as a new sin each time it is committed. Thus, forgiveness in Jesus is also brand new as you *repent and turn from all your transgressions and cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed*. It brings a new perspective to life now and especially for eternity. As Romans 6:23 also says: *the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord*.

God's question in verse 31 of our text is very pertinent: *Why will you die, O house of Israel?* It is actually a very good question. Why would a person cling so strongly to his sin and rebellion against God and forfeit the wonderful forgiveness of sins in Jesus? Why would a person choose

to suffer eternally in hell rather than live peacefully in heaven, especially since it is a *free gift of God*? Put this way, it just doesn't make good sense to give up eternal life to continue living with rage, discontent, grudges and resentments, guilt, hate, and much more spiritual turmoil. The new spirit knows why someone would make such a choice. 2 Corinthians 4:4 says: *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, Who is the image of God.* Notice again that God defines light and darkness differently as well.

This is why getting a new heart and a new spirit is God's doing. Since He takes *no pleasure in the death of anyone*, but wants them to *turn to Him* in repentance *and live eternally* (verse 32), He will constantly be striving to draw them back to Himself. He used His prophets such as Ezekiel to call them to repentance. It could even be an illness which the LORD permits to bring a person to an idolatry reality check in his or her life. Maybe He'll use circumstances to bring you to *repent and turn from all your transgressions* to Him in faith.

Jesus described this in a parable about a son who *squandered his father's property in reckless living*. Having nothing, he had to take a job feeding pigs. It got so bad that *he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything*. This didn't make sense since his *father's hired servants had more than enough* to eat. It brought

him to repent, confessing that he *sinned against heaven* (i.e. in the sight of God first and foremost) and against his father . . . **and** was *no longer worthy to be called his son* . . . **and** was willing to be treated as a hired servant (cf. Luke 15:15-24). He had received a new heart which gave him a new spirit of humility. Notice the father responded with *a new heart and a new spirit* as well according to Luke 15:23-24 → *Let us eat and celebrate. For this my son **was dead, and is alive again.***

Romans 6:11 says that because you have been buried with Christ and raised with Him in your baptism *you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*. Interesting how the Holy Spirit can take the old life in sin and make it a new life in righteousness in Christ each and every day (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

As the Holy Spirit works to give you a new heart each day in repentance and faith, He also gives you a new spirit so that your perspectives and actions reflect the new life you now have in Christ . . . **for eternity**. New is no longer defined according to changes in external circumstances, methods, ideals, and so forth. New is now defined as approaching the same old, same old with new meaning and purpose. This new spirit is that to which we refer in the salutation in the liturgy when the pastor says, “The Lord be with you” and you respond: “and with your spirit.” It’s not referring to the Holy Spirit but rather the new spirit which God gives to live a new life in Him. Amen.

I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone . . . and give you a heart of flesh.

*And I will put My Spirit within you,
and cause you to walk in My statutes
and be careful to obey My rules.*

(Ezekiel 36:26-27)

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