

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“IT IS NOT IN MAN...”

By: Jerry Fite

In our times, when we are challenged from sport drink commercials to the next reality television series to answer the question, “Is it in you?”, it seems a little “whimpish” if not a total sell out of the modern human spirit to say, “No, it is not in me...”.

Yet, Scripture points out clearly that man has such limitations. There are some things man has not the ability to do, regardless of his abundant reservoir of determination and directed will. Jeremiah writes, “*O Jehovah, I know that it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.*” (Jeremiah 10:23). The inspired prophet of God did not mind admitting that even though man has the ability to act, he has not the ability to direct his paths. What exactly does this mean?

By examining the context of the passage, we see that God is declaring judgment upon his idolatrous people. They have been constructing and worshipping idols. Through his prophet Jeremiah, God condemns such work saying, “*They are vanity, a work of delusion: in the time of*

their visitation they shall perish” (Jeremiah 10:16). Judgment is coming: “*The voice of tidings, behold, it cometh and a great commotion out of the north country, to make the cities of Judah a desolation, a dwelling—place of jackals*” (Jeremiah 10:22). Knowing of God’s potential wrath, Jeremiah pleads for God’s mercy in His corrective judgment: “*O Jehovah, correct me, but in measure; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing.*” (Jeremiah 10:24).

Jeremiah acknowledges in verse 23 that man has the ability to act and walk the way he sees fit. But the prophet quickly reminds us that man has not the ability to avoid God’s judgment, when God punishes man and brings upon him the consequences of his actions. God’s people in Jeremiah’s day were heading straight for destruction. It was now unavoidable. It is not in man, who had set out to walk in idolatry, to direct his paths to any other destination, but the end of idolatry’s path—God’s judgment.

We need to be reminded today of Jeremiah’s words when we are tempted to follow our covetous ways mentally constructing

our modern idols (Colossians 3:5). We may pursue money, earthly possessions, power, or fame, but they will not stand before God’s judgment. Like the stone idols of Jeremiah’s day, “*In the time of their visitation they shall perish*”.

We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give answer to what we have done in the body whether it be good or evil. (2 Corinthians 5:10). This is an appointment that we will all keep (Hebrews 9:27). We will not be able to direct our steps to any other destination. This fact should sober our thinking, and sharpen our focus on living our life doing good, and avoiding evil. (1 Thess. 5:21-22).

Man is emboldened by all his accomplishments to think of himself as possessing unlimited potential, and answerable to no one. Today, man worships man—a form of idolatry just as reprehensible before God as the wood and stone idols in Jeremiah’s day. Man walking in his own conceits, fails to see that he cannot direct his own steps to avoid the Judgment.