

Jeremiah 18:12

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart.

Analysis

Judah's defiant response: "And they said, There is no hope: but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." This is shocking apostasy—not ignorant rejection but deliberate, conscious rebellion. "There is no hope" could mean either "it's useless (to try to change)" or "we don't care about hope," but either way expresses determined continuance in sin.

"We will walk after our own devices" (mahshevot, מַחֲשָׁבוֹת, plans/schemes) asserts autonomy—we'll do what we want regardless of God's will. "Every one do the imagination of his evil heart" recalls Genesis 6:5 before the flood, when "every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually." This represents total moral corruption and defiance of God's authority.

This verse illustrates the Reformed doctrine of total depravity's full manifestation—not that everyone is maximally evil, but that sin's corruption can extend to complete rebellion where conscience is seared and the will is set against God (Rom 1:28, Eph 4:19, 1 Tim 4:2). Only divine grace can penetrate such hardness. Christ came to save such rebels, demonstrating that no sinner is beyond God's power to redeem, though many remain beyond their own willingness to repent.

Historical Context

This response captures Judah's condition during Jeremiah's ministry—not mere weakness but willful rebellion. Despite prophetic warnings, covenant history, and observable judgments on other nations, Judah consciously chose to continue in idolatry and injustice. This hardening process climaxed in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ, who wept over Jerusalem's refusal to repent (Luke 19:41-44). History warns that nations and individuals can reach a point of no return through persistent rebellion.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. Have you ever responded to God's call with 'there is no hope' or 'I will do what I want'?
2. What are the progressive steps that lead from initial resistance to hardened rebellion against God?
3. How does Christ's power to save the vilest sinner provide hope even for those who seem completely hardened?

Interlinear Text

וַיֹּאמְרוּ	כִּי	אֲחֵרִי	מִמְחֻשְׁבוֹתֵינוּ	נֶלְךָ
And they said	H3588	after	our own devices	H1980
H559		H310	H4284	
וְאִישׁ	שָׁרָר וְ	לִבּוֹ	הָרָע	נַעֲשֶׂה:
and we will every one	the imagination	heart	of his evil	do
H376	H8307	H3820	H7451	H6213

Additional Cross-References

Jeremiah 2:25 (Hope): Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst: but thou saidst, There is no hope: no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

Deuteronomy 29:19 (Parallel theme): And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

Isaiah 57:10 (Hope): Thou art wearied in the greatness of thy way; yet saidst thou not, There is no hope: thou hast found the life of thine hand; therefore thou wast not grieved.

Jeremiah 7:24 (Evil): But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward, and not forward.

Jeremiah 16:12 (Evil): And ye have done worse than your fathers; for, behold, ye walk every one after the imagination of his evil heart, that they may not hearken unto me:

Jeremiah 3:17 (Evil): At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

Luke 1:51 (Parallel theme): He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.