

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCE

Chapter 5 EXTENT

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Transcript

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EXTENT

When seeking to uphold some other great truths of Scripture by means of contemplating separately their component parts, we reminded the reader how very difficult it was to avoid some overlapping. The same thing needs to be pointed out here in connection with the subject we are now considering. A river has many tributaries and a surveyor must necessarily trace out each one separately, yet he does so with the knowledge that they all run out of or into the same main stream. A tree has many boughs which, though distinct members of it, often interweave. So it is with our present theme, and as we endeavor to trace its various branches there is of necessity a certain measure of repetition. Though in one way this is to be regretted, being apt to weary the impatient, yet it has its advantages, for it better fixes in our minds some of the principal features. We began by showing the solemn reality of man's spiritual impotence, furnishing clear proofs from Holy Writ. Next, we endeavored to delineate in detail the precise nature of man's inability: that it is penal, moral, voluntary and criminal. Then we considered the root of the awful malady, evidencing that it lies in the corruption of our very nature. We now examine the extent of the spiritual paralysis which has attacked fallen man's being. Let us state it concisely before elaborating and offering confirmation. The spiritual impotence of the natural man is total and entire, irreparable and irremediable as far as all human efforts are concerned. Fallen man is utterly indisposed and disabled, thoroughly opposed to God and His law, wholly inclined to evil. Sooner would thistles yield grapes than fallen man originate a spiritual volition. REIGN OF SIN IN UNREGENERATE We have supplied a number of proofs that man's nature is now thoroughly corrupt. This is seen in the fact that he is sinful from his earliest years; the first dawnings of reason in a child are fouled by sin. It appears too in that men sin continually. As Jeremiah 13:23 expresses it, they are "accustomed to do evil." It is also evidenced by the universal prevalence of this disease; not only some, nor even the great majority, but all without exception are depraved. It is demonstrated by their freedom in this state. All sin continually of their own accord. A child has only to be left to himself and he will quickly put his mother to shame. Moreover, men cannot be restrained from their sin. Neither education nor religious instruction, neither expostulation nor threatening (human or divine) will deter them; that which is bred in the bone comes out in the flesh. Corruption can neither be eradicated nor moderated. The tongue is a little member, yet God Himself declares it is one which no man can tame

(Jam. 3:8). "The law of sin which is in my members" (Rom. 7:23). The first thing which attends every law as such is its rule or sway: "The law hath dominion over [literally 'lords it over'] a man as long as he liveth" (Rom. 7:1). The giving of law is the act of a superior, and in its very nature it exacts obedience by way of dominion. The law of sin possesses no moral authority over its subjects, but because it exerts a powerful and effectual dominion over its slaves it is rightly termed a law. Though it has no rightful government over men, yet it has the equivalent, for it dominates as a king: "Sin hath reigned unto death" (Rom. 5:21). Because believers have been delivered from the complete dominion of this evil monarch, they are exhorted, "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof" (Rom. 6:12). Here we learn the precise case with the unregenerate: Sin reigns undisputedly within them, and they yield ready and full obedience to it. The second thing which attends all law as such is its sanctions, which have efficacy to move those who are under the law to do the things it requires. In other words, a law has rewards and penalties accompanying it, and these serve as inducements to obedience even though the things commanded are unpleasant. Speaking generally, all laws owe their efficacy to the rewards and punishments annexed to them. Nor is the "law of sin"—indwelling corruption—any exception. The pleasures and profits which sin promises its subjects are rewards which the vast majority of men lose their souls to obtain. A striking biblical illustration of this is the occasion when the law of sin contended against the law of grace in Moses, who chose "rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward" (Heb. 11:25-26). In the above example we see the conflict in the mind of Moses between the law of sin and the law of grace. The motive on the part of the law of sin, by which it sought to influence him and with which it prevails over the majority, was the temporary reward which it set before him, namely, the present enjoyment of the pleasures of sin. By that it contended with the eternal reward annexed to the law of grace, called here "the recompense of the reward." By this wretched reward the law of sin keeps the whole world in obedience to its commands. Scripture, observation and personal experience teach us how powerful and potent this influence is. This was what induced our first parents to taste the forbidden fruit, Esau to sell his birthright, Balaam to hire himself to Balak, Judas to betray the Saviour. This is what now moves the vast majority of our fellowmen to prefer Mammon to God, Belial to Christ, the things of time and sense to spiritual and eternal realities. The law of sin also has penalties with which it threatens any who are urged to cast off its yoke. These are the sneers, the ostracism, the persecutions of their peers. The law of sin announces to its votaries that nothing but unhappiness and suffering is the portion of those who would be in subjection to God, that His service is oppressive and joyless. It represents the yoke of Christ as a grievous burden, His gospel as quite unsuited to those who are young and healthy, the Christian life as a gloomy and miserable thing. Whatever troubles and tribulations come on the people of God because of their fidelity to Him, whatever hardships and self-denial the duties of mortification require, are represented by the law of sin as so many penalties following the neglect of its commands. By these it prevails over the "fearful, and unbelieving," who have no share in the life eternal (Rev. 21:8). It is hard to say where its greater strength lies: in its pretended rewards or in its pretended punishments. The power and effect of this law of sin appears from its very nature. It is not an outward, inoperative, directing law, but an inbred, working, effectual law. A law which is proposed to us cannot be compared for efficacy with a law bred in us. God wrote the moral law on tables of stone, and now it is found in the Scriptures. But what is its efficacy? As it is external to men and proposed to them, does it enable them to perform the things which it requires? No indeed. The moral law is rendered "weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). Indwelling corruption makes it impossible for man to meet its demands. And how does God deliver from this awful bondage? In this present life by making His law internal for His elect, for at their regeneration He makes good that promise "I will put my law in their inward

parts, and write it in their hearts" (Jer. 31:33). Thus His law becomes an internal, living, operative and effectual principle within them. Now the law of sin is an indwelling law. It is "sin that dwelleth in me"; it is "in my members." It is so deep in man that in one sense it is said to be the man himself: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18; cf. vv. 20, 23). From this reasoning we may perceive the full dominion it has over the natural man. It always abides in the soul, and is never absent. It "dwelleth," has its constant residence, in us. It does not come upon the soul only at certain times; if that were so, much might be accomplished during its absence, and the soul might fortify itself against it. No, it never leaves. Wherever we are, whatever we are engaged in, this law of sin is present. Whether we are alone or in company, by night or by day, it is our constant companion. A ruthless enemy indwells our soul. How little this is considered by men! O the woeful security of the unregenerate: a fire is in their bones, fast consuming them. The watchfulness of most professing Christians corresponds little to the danger of their state. Being an indwelling law, sin applies itself to its work with great facility and ease. It needs not force open any door nor use any stress whatever. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty except by those very faculties in which this law has its residence. Let the mind or understanding be directed to anything, and there are ignorance, darkness, madness to contend with. As for the will, in it are spiritual deadness, mulish stubbornness, devilish obstinacy. Shall the affections of the heart be set on divine objects? How can they be, when they are wholly inclined toward the world and present things and are prone to every vanity and defilement? Water never rises above its own level. How easy it is, then, for indwelling sin to inject itself into all we do, hindering whatever is good and furthering whatever is evil. Does conscience seek to assert itself? Then our corruptions soon teach us to turn a deaf ear to its voice. The Scripture everywhere declares the seat of this law of sin to be the heart. "Out of the heart are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). It is there that indwelling corruption keeps its special residence; it is there this evil monarch holds court. It has invaded and possessed the throne of God within us. "The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live" (Eccles. 9:3). Here is the source of all the madness which appears in men's lives. "All these evil things [mentioned in vv. 21-22] come from within, and defile the man" (Mark 7:23). There are many outward temptations and provocations which befall man, which excite and stir him up to many evils; yet they merely open the vessel and let out what is stored within it. "An evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh" (Luke 6:45). This "evil treasure" or store is the principle of all moral action on the part of the natural man. Temptations and occasions put nothing into men; they only draw out what was in them before. The root or spring of all wickedness lies in the center of our corrupt being.

ENMITY OF CARNAL MIND AGAINST GOD

Let us next consider the outstanding property of indwelling sin. "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). That which is here called the carnal mind is the same as the law of sin. It is to be solemnly noted that the carnal mind is not only an enemy, for as such there would be a possibility of some reconciliation with God; it is enmity itself, thus not disposed to accept any terms of peace. Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. The only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy their enmity. So the apostle tells us, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10); that is, a supernatural work has been accomplished in the elect on the ground of the merits of Christ's sacrifice, which results in the reconciliation of those who were enemies. But when the apostle came to speak of enmity there was no other way but for it to be destroyed: "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity" (Eph. 2:15). Let it also be duly considered that the apostle used a noun and not an adjective: "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). He did not say that it merely is opposed to God, but that it is positive opposition itself. It is not black but blackness; it is not an enemy but enmity; it is not corrupt but corruption itself; not rebellious but rebellion. As C. H. Spurgeon so succinctly expressed it, "The heart, though it be deceitful, is positively

deceitful: it is evil in the concrete, sin in the essence: it is the distillation, the quintessence of all things that are vile; it is not envious against God, it is enmity itself—not at enmity, it is actual enmity." This is unspeakably dreadful. To the same effect are those fearful words of the psalmist: "Their inward part is very wickedness" (5:9). Beyond that human language cannot go. This carnal mind is in every fallen creature, not even excluding the newborn infant. Many who have had the best of parents have turned out the worst of sons and daughters. This carnal mind is in each of us every moment of our lives. It is there just as truly when we are unconscious of its presence as when we are aware of the rising of opposition in us to God. The wolf may sleep, but it is a wolf still. The snake may rest among the flowers, and a boy may stroke its back, but it is a snake still. The sea is the house of storms even when it is placid as a lake. And the heart, when we do not see its seethings, when it does not spew out the hot lava of its corruption, is still the same dread volcano. The extent of this fearful enmity appears in the fact that the whole of the carnal mind is opposed to God: every part, every power, every passion of it. Every faculty of man's being has been affected by the fall. Take the memory. Is it not a solemn fact that we retain evil things far more easily than those which are good? We can recollect a foolish song much more readily than we can a passage of Scripture. We grasp with an iron hand things which concern our temporal interests, but hold with feeble fingers those which respect our eternal welfare. Take the imagination. Why is it that when a man is given that which intoxicates him, or when he is drugged with opium, his imagination soars as on eagles' wings? Why does not the imagination work thus when the body is in a normal condition? Simply because it is depraved; and unless our body enters a sordid environment the fancy will not hold high carnival. Take the judgment. How vain—often mad—are its reasonings even in the wisest of men. This fearful enmity is irremediable. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). Even though divine grace intervenes and subdues its force, yet it does not effect the slightest change in its nature. It may not be so powerful and effectual in operation as when it had more life and freedom, yet it is enmity still. As every drop of poison is poison and will infect, as every spark of fire is fire and will burn, so is every part and degree of the law of sin enmity—it will poison, it will burn. The Apostle Paul can surely be regarded as having made as much progress in the subduing of this enmity as any man on earth, yet he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24) and cried for deliverance from this irreconcilable enmity. Mortification abates its awful force, but it does not effect any reformation in it. Whatever effect divine grace may work upon it, no change is made in it; it is enmity still. Not only is this awful enmity inbred in every one of Adam's fallen race, not only has it captured and dominated every faculty of our beings, not only is it present within us every moment of our lives, not only is it incapable of reconciliation. Most frightful of all, this indwelling sin is "enmity against God." In other passages it is exhibited as our own enemy: "Abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (1 Pet. 2:11): those indwelling corruptions are constantly seeking to destroy us. This deadly poison of sin, this ruinous law of indwelling evil, consistently opposes the new nature or law of grace and holiness in the believer: "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit" (Gal. 5:17); that is, the principle of sin fights against and seeks to vanquish the principle of spirituality. It is dreadful to relate that its proper formal object is God Himself. It is "enmity against God." This frightful enmity has, as it were, received from Satan the same command which the Assyrians had from their monarch: "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king" (1 Kings 22:31). Sin sets itself not against men but against the King of heaven. This appears in the judgments which men form of God. What is the natural man's estimate of the Creator and Ruler of this world? For answer let us turn to the regions of heathendom. Consider the horrible superstitions, the disgusting rites, the hideous symbols of Deity, the cruel penances and gross immoralities which everywhere prevail in lands without the gospel. Consider the appalling abominations which for so long passed, and which in numerous instances still pass, under the sacred name of divine worship. These are not merely the products of ignorance of God; they are the

immediate fruits of positive enmity against Him. But we need not go so far afield as heathendom. The same terrible feature confronts us in so-called Christendom. Witness the multitudinous and horrible errors which prevail on every side in the religious realm today, the degrading and insulting views of the Most High held by the great majority of church members. And what of the vast multitudes who make no profession at all? Some think of and act toward the great Jehovah as One who is to be little regarded and respected. They consider Him as One entitled to very little esteem, scarcely worthy of any notice at all. "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto him?" (Job 21:14-15). Such is the language of their hearts and lives, if not of their lips. Countless others flatly deny the existence of God. The most solemn and dreadful aspect of the subject we are here contemplating is that the outstanding property of the "flesh" or indwelling sin consists of enmity against God Himself, such enmity that "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). This frightful and implacable enmity is entire and universal, being opposed to all of God. If there were anything of God—His nature, His character or His works—that indwelling corruption was not enmity against, then the soul might have a retreat within itself where it could shelter and apply itself to that which is of God. Unfortunately, such is the enmity of fallen man that it hates all that is of God, everything wherein or whereby we have to do with Him. Sin is enmity against God, and therefore against all of God. It is enmity against His law and against His gospel alike, against every duty to Him, against any communion with Him. It is not only against His sovereignty, His holiness, His power, His grace, that sin rears its horrible head; it abhors everything of or pertaining to God. His commandments and His threatenings, His promises and His warnings, are equally disliked. His providences are reviled and His dealings with the world blasphemed. And the nearer anything approaches to God, the greater is man's enmity against it. The more of spirituality and holiness manifested in anything, the more the flesh rises up against it. That which is most of God meets with most opposition. "Ye have set at naught all my counsel and would none of my reproof" (Prov. 1:25) is the divine indictment. The wicked heart of man is opposed to not merely some parts of God's counsel but the whole of it. Not only is this fearful enmity opposed to everything of God, but it is all-inclusive in the soul. Had indwelling sin been content with partial dominion, had it subjugated only a part of the soul, it might have been more easily and successfully opposed. But this enmity against God has invaded and captured the entire territory of man's being; it has not left a single faculty of the soul free from its tyrannical yoke; it has not exempted a single member from its cruel bondage. When the Spirit of God comes with His gracious power to conquer the soul, He finds nothing whatever in the sinner's soul which is in sympathy with His operations, nothing that will cooperate with Him. All within us alike opposes and strives against His working. There is not the faintest desire for deliverance within the unregenerate: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint" (Isa. 1:5). Even when grace has made its entrance, sin still dwells in all its coasts. Distasteful and humiliating as this truth may be, we must dwell further on it and amplify what has been merely affirmed. We showed how this fearful enmity is evidenced by the judgments or concepts which men form of God. Sin has so perverted the human mind that distorted views and horrible ideas are entertained of the Deity. Nor is this all. Sin has so inflated the creature that he considers himself competent to comprehend the incomprehensible. Filled with pride, he refuses to acknowledge his limitations and dependence; and in his flight after things which are far beyond his reach, he indulges in the most impious speculations. When he cannot stretch himself to the infinite dimensions of truth, he deliberately contracts the truth to his own little measure. This is what the apostle meant by fallen man's "vanity of mind." The natural man's enmity against God appears in his affections. As the superlatively excellent One, God has paramount claims on man's heart. He should be the supreme object of his delight. But is He? Far from it. The smallest trifles are held in greater esteem than is God, the fountain of all true joy. The unregenerate see in Him no beauty

that they should desire Him. When they hear of His sublime attributes they dislike them. When they hear His Word quoted it is repugnant to them. When invited to draw near to His throne of grace they have no inclination to do so. They have no desire for fellowship with God; they would rather think and talk about anything other than the Lord and His government. They secretly hate His people, and will only tolerate their presence so long as they conform to their wishes. The pleasures and baubles of this world entirely fill their hearts. Corrupted nature can never give birth to a single affection which is really spiritual. The natural man's enmity appears in his will. Inevitably so, for God's will directly crosses His. God is infinitely holy; man is thoroughly evil; therefore God commands the things which man hates and forbids the things man likes. Hence man despises His authority, refuses His yoke, rebels against His government and goes his own way. Men have no concern for God's glory and no respect for His will. They will not listen to His reproofs nor be checked in their defiant course by His most solemn threatenings. They are as intractable as a wild ass' colt. They are like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. They prate of the freedom of their wills, but their wills are active against God and never toward Him. They are determined to have their own way no matter what the cost. When Christ is presented to them they will not come to Him that they might have life. Sooner will water flow uphill of its own accord than the will of man incline itself to God. The enmity of the natural man against God appears in his conscience. Because he is anxious to be at peace with himself in the reflections which he makes upon his own life and character, it is obvious that his conscience must be a perpetual source of false representations of God. When guilt rankles in his breast, man will blaspheme the justice of his Judge. And self-love prompts him to denounce the punishment of himself as remorseless cruelty. A guilty conscience, unwilling to relinquish its iniquities and yet desirous of being delivered from fears of punishment, prompts men to represent Deity as subject to the weaknesses and follies of humanity. God is to be flattered and bribed with external marks of submission and esteem, or else insulted when the worshiper regards Him as cruel. Conscience fills the mind with prejudices against the nature and character of God, just as a human insult fills our heart with prejudice against the one who mortifies our self-respect. Conscience cannot judge rightly of one whom it hates and dreads. The enmity of the natural man against God evidences itself in his practice. This dreadful hatred of God is not a passive thing, but an active principle. Sinners are involved in actual warfare against their Maker. They have enlisted under the banner of Satan and they deliberately oppose and defy the Lord. They scoff at His Word, disregard His precepts, flout His providences, resist His Spirit, and turn a deaf ear to the pleas of His servants. Their hearts are fully set to do wickedness. "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit: the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Rom. 3:13-18). There is in every sinner a deeply rooted aversion for God, a seed of malice. While God leaves sinners alone, their malice may not be clearly revealed; but let them feel a little of His wrath upon them, and their hatred is swiftly manifest. The sinner's enmity against God is unmixed with any love at all. The natural man is utterly devoid of the principle of love for God. As Jonathan Edwards solemnly expressed it, "The heart of the sinner is as devoid of love for God as a corpse is of vital heat." As the Lord Jesus expressly declared, "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you" (John 5:42). And remember, that fearful indictment was made by One who could infallibly read the human heart. Moreover that indictment was passed on not the openly vicious and profane but on the strictest religionists of His day. Reader, you may have a mild temper, an amiable disposition, a reputation for kindness and generosity; but if you have never been born again you have no more real love in your heart for God than Judas had for the Saviour. What a frightful character—the unmitigated enemy of God! The power of man's enmity against God is so great that nothing finite can break it. The sinner cannot break it himself. Should an unregenerate person read this

and be horrified at the hideous picture which it presents of himself, and should he earnestly resolve to cease his vile enmity against God, he cannot do so. He can no more change his nature than the Ethiopian can change the color of his skin. No preacher can persuade him to throw down the weapons of his rebellion and become a friend of God. One may set before him the excellence of the divine character and plead with him to be reconciled to God, but his heart will remain as steeled against Him as ever. Even though God Himself works miracles in the sight of sinners, no change is effected in their hearts. Pharaoh's enmity was not overcome by the most astonishing displays of divine power, nor was that of the religionists of Palestine in Christ's day. Indwelling sin may be likened to a powerful and swiftly flowing river. So long as its tributaries are open and waters are continually supplied to its streams, though a dam is set up, its waters rise and swell until it bears down on all and overflows the banks about it. Thus it is with the enmity of the carnal mind against God. While its springs and fountains remain open, it is utterly vain for man to set up a dam of his convictions and resolutions, promises and penances, vows and self-efforts. They may check it for a while, but it will rise up and rage until sooner or later it breaks down all those convictions and resolutions or makes itself an underground passage by some secret lust which will give full vent to it. The springs of that enmity must be subdued by regenerating grace, the streams abated by holiness, or the soul will be drowned and destroyed. Even after regeneration, indwelling sin gives the soul no rest, but constantly wages war upon it. The Christian is, in fact, the only one who is conscious of the awful power and ragings of this principle of enmity. How often he is made aware that when he would do good, evil is present with him, opposing every effort he makes Godward. How often, when his soul is doing quite another thing, engaged in a totally different design, sin starts something in his heart or imagination which carries it away to that which is evil. Yes, the soul may be seriously engaged in the mortification of sin, when indwelling corruption will by some means or other lead the soul into trifling with the very sin which it is endeavoring to conquer. Such surprisals as these are proofs of the habitual propensity to evil of that principle of enmity against God from which they proceed. The ever abiding presence and continual operation of this principle prevent much communion with God, disturb holy meditations and defile the conscience. But let us return to our consideration of the enmity of the unregenerate. This enmity in the heart of the sinner is so great that he is God's mortal enemy. Now a man may feel unfriendly toward another, or he may cherish ill will against him, yet not be his mortal enemy. That is, his enmity against the one he hates is not so great that nothing will satisfy him but his death. But it is far otherwise with sinners and God. They are His mortal enemies. True, it does not lie in their power to kill Him, yet the desire is there in the heart. There is a principle of enmity within fallen man which would rejoice if Deity could be annihilated. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Ps. 14:1). In the Bible the words "there is" are in italics—supplied by the translators for clarity. But the original has it, "The fool hath said in his heart, No God." It is not the denial of God's existence, but the affirmation that he desires no contact with Him: "I desire no God; I would that He did not exist." Here is the frightful climax: The carnal mind is enmity with the very being of God. Sin is destructive of all being. Man is suicidal—he has destroyed himself. He is homicidal—his evil influence destroys his fellowmen. He is guilty of Deicide (the act of killing a divine being)—he wishes he could annihilate the very being of God. But the sinner does not regard himself as being so vile. He does not consider himself to be the implacable and inveterate enemy of God. He has a far better opinion of himself than that. Consequently, if he hears or reads anything like this, he is filled with objections: "I do not believe I am such a dreadful creature as to hate God. I do not feel such enmity in my heart. I am not conscious that I harbor any ill will against Him. Who should know better than myself? If I hate a fellowman I am aware of it; how could I be totally unconscious of it if there is in my soul such enmity against God?" Several answers may be given to these questions. First, if the objector would seriously examine his heart and contemplate himself, unless he were strangely blinded, he would certainly discover

in himself those very elements in which enmity essentially consists. He loves and respects his friends, he is fond of their company, he is anxious to please them and promote their good. Is this his attitude toward God? If he is honest with himself, he knows it is not. He has no respect for His authority, no concern for His glory, no desire for fellowship with Him. He gives God none of his time, despises His Word, breaks His commandments, rejects His Son. He has been opposed to God all his life. These things are the very essence of enmity. Second, the sinner's ignorance and unconsciousness of his enmity against God are due to the false conceptions which he entertains of His nature and character. If he were better acquainted with the God of Holy Writ, he would be more aware of his hatred of Him. But the God he believes in is merely a creation of his own fancy. The true God is ineffably holy, inflexibly just. His wrath burns against sin and He will by no means clear the guilty. If mankind likes the true God, why is it that they have set up so many false gods? If they admire the truth, why have they invented so many false systems of religion? The contrariety between the carnal mind and God is the contrariety between sin and holiness. The divine law requires man to love God supremely; instead, he loves himself supremely. It requires him to delight in God superlatively; instead, he wholly delights in all that is not of God. It requires him to love his neighbor as himself; instead, his heart is inordinately selfish. Third, we have said that the enmity of the natural man against God is a mortal one. This the sinner will not admit. But indubitable proof of the assertion is found in man's treatment of God when, in the person of His Son, He became incarnate. When God brought Himself as near to man as Infinity could approach, man saw in Him "no beauty" that he should desire Him; rather was He despised and rejected by him. Not only did man dislike Him (Isa. 53:2-3), but he hated Him "without a cause" (John 15:25). So bitter and relentless was that hatred that man exclaimed, "This is the heir: come, let us kill him" (Luke 20:14). And what form of death did man select for Him? The most painful and shameful his malignity could devise. And the Son of God is still despised and rejected. Remember His words "He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:23). Our proof is complete. What bearing on our subject has this lengthy discourse on man's enmity? Why take up the total depravity of fallen man when we are supposed to be considering his spiritual impotence? We have not wandered from our theme at all. Instead, while dealing with the root and extent of man's impotence, we have followed strictly the order of Scripture. What is the very next word of the apostle's after Romans 8:7? This: "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (v. 8). It is just because man is corrupt at the very center of his being, because indwelling sin is a law over him, because his mind (the noblest part of his being) is enmity against God, that he is completely incapable of doing anything to meet with the divine approbation. Here is inevitable inference, the inescapable conclusion: "So then"—because fallen man's mind is enmity with God and incapable of subordination to His law—"they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:8). To be "in the flesh" is not necessarily to live immorally, for there is the religiousness as well as the irreligiousness of the flesh. So great, so entire, so irremediable is this impotence of fallen man that he is unable to effect any change in his nature, acquire any strength by his own efforts, prepare himself to receive divine grace, until the Spirit renews him and works in him both to will and to do of God's good pleasure. He is unable to discern spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14), incapable of believing (John 8:47), powerless to obey (Rom. 8:7). He cannot think a good thought of himself (2 Cor. 3:5), he cannot speak a good word; indeed, without Christ he "can do nothing" (John 15:5). Thus, the sinner is "without strength," wholly impotent and unable to turn himself to God.

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