

The Total Depravity of Man Chapter 10

RAMIFICATIONS

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Transcript

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While endeavoring to present a complete picture of fallen man as he is depicted by the divine pen in the Scriptures, it is very difficult to avoid a measure of overlapping as we turn from one aspect or feature to another, or to prevent a certain amount of repetition. Yet, seeing that this is the method which the Holy Spirit has largely taken, an apology is scarcely required from those who seek to follow His plan. We have shown in a more or less general way the terrible havoc sin has worked in the human constitution: now we shall consider it more specifically. Having presented the broad outline, it remains for us to fill in the details. In other words, our immediate task is to ponder and describe the several parts of human depravity as it has vitiated the several sections of our inner man. Though the soul, like the body, is a unit, it also has a number of distinct members or faculties, none of which has been exempted from the debasing effects of man's apostasy from his Maker. **Debasing Effects of Apostasy** This was strikingly exemplified in the miracles of Christ. The various bodily disorders which the divine Physician healed during His sojourn on earth were not only so many advance types of the marvels of grace that He performs in the spiritual realm in connection with the redeemed; they were also so many emblematical representations of the moral diseases which affect and afflict the soul of fallen man. The poor leper, covered with nauseous sores, solemnly portrayed the horrible pollutions of the human heart. The man born blind, incapable of seeing the wonders and beauties of God's external works, expressed the sad state of the human mind, which, because of the darkness that is upon it, is unable to discover or receive the things of the Spirit, no matter how simply and plainly they are explained to him. The paralytic's useless limbs showed beforehand the impotence of the will Godward, being totally devoid of any power to turn us to Christ. The woman lying sick of the fever, experiencing unnatural craving, delirium and restlessness, depicted the disordered state of our affections. The demon-possessed man, living in the tombs, incapable of being securely bound, crying and cutting himself, typified the various activities of the conscience in the unregenerate. Corruption has invaded every part of man's nature, over spreading the whole of his complex being. As physical disorders spare no members of the body, so even man's spirit has not escaped the ravages of depravity. Yet who is capable of comprehending this in its awful breadth and depth, length and height? It is not simply the inferior powers of the soul which the plague of sin has seized; the contagion has ascended into the higher

regions of our persons, polluting the sublimest faculties. This is a part of God's punishment. It is a great mistake to suppose that the divine judgment on man's defection is reserved for the next life. Men are heavily penalized in this world, both outwardly and inwardly, and subject to many adverse providences. Outwardly, in their bodies, names, estates, relations and employments; and finally, by physical death and dissolution. Inwardly, by blindness of mind, hardness of heart, turbulent passions, the gnawing of conscience. However little regarded, by reason of their stupidity and insensibility, yet the inward visitations of God's curse are far more dreadful than the outward ones, and are regarded as such by those who truly fear the Lord and see things in His light. Let us consider each in detail.

Blindness of Mind The mind is that faculty of the soul by which objects and things are first known and apprehended. In distinguishing the understanding from the mind, the latter is that which weighs, discriminates and determines, judging between the concepts formed in the former, being the guide of the soul, the selector and rejecter of those notions the mind has received. Both are deranged by sin, for we are told that "their minds were blinded" (II Cor. 3:14) and their "understanding darkened" (Eph. 4:18). The fall has completely shuttered the windows of man's soul, yet he is not aware of it; in fact, he emphatically denies it. Heathen philosophers and medieval scholars both believed that the affections, in the lower part of the soul, were somewhat defiled, but insisted that the intellectual faculty was pure, saying that reason still directed and advised us to do the best things. It is not strange that blind reason should think it sees, for while it judges everything else it is least capable of estimating itself because of its very nearness to itself. Though a man's eye can see the deformity of his hands or feet, it cannot see the bloodshot that is in itself, unless it has a mirror in which to discern the same. In like manner, even corrupt nature, by its own light, recognizes the disorders in the sensual part of man; yet it cannot discern the defilement that is in the spirit itself. The mirror of God's Word is required to discover that, and even that mirror is not sufficient. The light of divine grace has to shine within, in order to expose and discover the imbecility of the reasoning faculty. Hence Holy Writ throws the main emphasis on the depravity of this highest part of man's being. When the apostle wanted to show how impure unbelievers are, though they profess to know God, he averred, "Even their mind and conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15). They least of all suspected those parts as being tainted, especially since they were illumined with some rays of the knowledge of God. Thus, in opposition to their conceit, the superior faculties alone are mentioned, and stressed with an "even." How weighty and full the testimony of Scripture is on this solemn feature: "When they knew God [traditionally], they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Rom. 1:21-22). That reference is to the Gentiles after the flood. One of the fearful curses executed on Israel, because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord their God and refused to do His commandments, was "The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: and thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness" (Deut. 28:28-29). Of all mankind it is said, "There is none that understandeth. The way of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:11, 17). "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12). "The world by wisdom knew not God" (I Cor. 1:21). Despite all their schools, they were ignorant of Him, "desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm" (I Tim. 1:7), "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). In the natural there are two factors which prevent men from seeing: nightfall, unless there is the aid of artificial light, and loss of sight. The one is external, the other internal. So it is in the spiritual: there are an objective and a subjective darkness, both on men and in men. The first consists in a lack of those means by which they may be enlightened in the knowledge of God and heavenly things. What the sun is to natural things on the earth, the Word is to spiritual things (Ps. 19:1-4; cf. Rom. 10:10-11). Spiritual darkness is on all to whom the gospel is not declared or by whom it is rejected. It is the mission and work

of the Holy Spirit to take away this objective darkness, and until it is done no one can see or enter the kingdom of God. This He does by sending the gospel into a country, nation or town. It does not obtain entrance there, nor is it restrained anywhere, by accident or by human effort. It is dispensed according to the sovereign will of the Spirit of God. He it is who endows, calls and sends men forth to preach, determining, either by His secret impulses or by the operations of His providence (Acts 16:6-10), where they shall minister. But it is the subjective darkness on the minds of the unregenerate, with its influences and consequences, which is here considered. It is not simply ignorance but a foul disease. "He is proud, knowing nothing, but... [sick] about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth" (I Tim. 6:4-5). Their minds are not only rebellious but diseased and corrupt. This distemper of mind could be called an itch after fables (II Tim. 4:34). Scripture calls that contentious wisdom of which the learned of this world are so proud "earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15). Both the verse before and the one following show that envy, malice, lying and deception, though in both the affections and the will, are rooted in the understanding. Hence God must give repentance or a change of mind before there can be an acknowledgment of the truth and a recovery from the snare of the devil (II Tim. 2:25-26). This darkness of the understanding is the cause of the rebellion in the affections and will. Men seek so inordinately the pleasures of sin because their minds do not know God. They are strangers to Him and can have no fellowship with Him, for friendship and fellowship are grounded on knowledge. To have communion with God, knowledge of Him is necessary. Accordingly the principal thing God does when He gives admittance into the covenant of grace is teach men to know Him (Jer. 31:33-34). Otherwise men are estranged from Him through ignorance (Eph. 4:17-19). The darkness of the mind is not only the root of all sin but the cause of most of the corruptions in men's lives. Hence we find that Paul mentions "fleshly wisdom" as the antithesis of the principle of grace (II Cor. 1:12). For the same reason men are said to be "sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22). That this is the cause of the greatest part of the wickedness in the world is clear from Isaiah 47:10: "Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee." Corrupt reasoning and false judgment are the prime motivations of all our sinning. Pride has its chief place in the mind, as Colossians 2:18 shows. This darkness is forceful and influential—yes, dynamic—according to that expression in Colossians 1:13: "delivered us from the power of darkness," the word "power" signifying that which rules. It fills the mind with enmity against God and all His ways, and turns the will in a contrary direction so that, instead of the affections being set on things above, they "mind earthly things" (Phil. 3:19). This is the habitual inclination. The will minds the things of the flesh (Rom. 8:5), setting itself to provide sensual objects for the gratification of the body. It fills the mind with strong prejudices against the spiritual things proposed in the gospel. Those prejudices are called strongholds and imaginations (reasonings), and "every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God" (II Cor. 10:4-5). They are pulled down and destroyed in the day of God's power, when souls are brought into willing subjection to Him. The sins of the mind continue longest, for though the body decays and its lusts wither, those of the mind are as vigorous and active in old age as in youth. As the understanding is the most excellent part of man, so its corruption is worse than that of the other faculties: "If.. the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). The effects of this darkness are fearful indeed. Its subjects are made incapable of discerning or receiving spiritual things, so that there is a total inability with respect to God and the ways of pleasing Him. No matter how well endowed intellectually the unregenerate man may be, what the extent of his education and learning, how skillful in connection with natural things, in spiritual matters he is devoid of intelligence until he is renewed in the spirit of his mind. As a person who has no sight is unaware of the strongest rays of light directed at him, and cannot form any real ideas of the appearance of things, so the natural man,

because of his blindness of mind, is unable to discern the nature of heavenly things. Said Christ to the Jews of His day, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes" (Luke 19:42) concealed from their perception as effectually as things which are purposely hidden from prying eyes. Even though one had the desire to discover them, he would search in vain for all eternity unless God was pleased to reveal them, as He did to Peter (Matt. 16:17). The spiritual blindness in the mind of the natural man not only disables him to make the first discovery of the things of God; even when they are published and set before his eyes, as in the Word of truth, he cannot discern them. Whatever notions he may form of them are dissonant to their nature, and the thoughts he has of them are the very reverse of what they actually are. They regard the highest wisdom as foolishness, and despise and reject glorious things. "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you" (Acts 13:41). The preceding verses show that Paul clearly preached Christ and His gospel, and then cautioned his hearers to escape the doom spoken of by the prophet. It is not the bare presentation of the truth which will convince men. Though clearly propounded, it may still be obscure to them: "It is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not" (II Cor. 4:3-4). Their understandings need to be divinely opened in order to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45). The subjects of this darkness are spiritually insensible and stupid. This prevents them from making a true inspection of their hearts. They see only the outward man, and do not feel the deadly wound within. There is a sea of corruption, but it is unperceived. The holiness, beauty and rectitude of their nature have departed, but they are quite unconcerned. They are miserable and poor, blind and naked, yet totally unaware of it. Thus the unregenerate go on in a course of rebellion against the Lord, and at the same time conclude that all is well with them. As the goodness of God does not melt them, neither do His severest judgments move them to amend their ways. Far from it, they are like wicked King Ahaz, of whom it is recorded, "And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD" (II Chron. 28:22). The masses are defiant and unrepentant today, when the peace of the whole world is so seriously menaced: "LORD, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see" (Isa. 26:11). Space allows us to mention only one other effect of this blindness of the mind; it is termed "the vanity of their mind" in Ephesians 4:17. Scripture says useless and fruitless things are vain. In Matthew 15:9 the word means "to no purpose." Hence the idols of the heathen and the rites used in their worship are called vain things (Acts 14:15). In I Samuel 12:21 we read that vain things "cannot profit nor deliver." Vanity is synonymous with foolishness, for Proverbs 12:11 states that vain men are one with persons "void of understanding." In Jeremiah 4:14 vain things are linked with "wickedness," thus they are sinful. Vain men and sons of Belial are synonymous (II Chron. 13:7). This vanity of the mind induces the natural man to pursue shadows and miss the substance, to be engaged with figments instead of realities, to prefer lies to the truth. This vanity leads men to follow the fashions and revel in the pleasures of a vain world. This sinful state of mind is in all sorts of persons, old and young, showing itself in foolish imaginations by which it makes provision for the flesh and its lusts. It appears as a reluctance to think about holy things; when the Word is preached, the mind wanders like a butterfly in a garden. It "feedeth on foolishness" (Prov. 15:14), and has an itching curiosity about the affairs of others. Blindness of Heart The heart is the center of our moral being, out of which flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23; cf. Matt. 12:35). The nature of the heart is at once indicated by its being designated a "stony heart" (Ezek. 11:19). The figure is a very apt one. As a stone is a product of the earth, so it has the property of the earth: heaviness, a tendency to fall. Thus it is with the natural mind. Men's affections are wholly set on the world; and though God made man upright with his head erect, yet the soul is bowed down to the ground. The physical curse pronounced on the serpent is also fulfilled in his seed, for the things on which they feed turn to ashes, so that dust is their meat (Isa. 65:25). Sin has so calloused

man's heart that, Godward, it is loveless and lifeless, cold and insensible. That is one reason why the moral law was written on tables of stone: to represent emblematically the stupid, unyielding hearts men had, as is clearly implied by the contrast presented in II Corinthians 3:3. The heart of the regenerate is also likened to "rock" (Jer. 23:29), and to "adamant stone" (Zech. 7:12), which is harder than flint. Those far from righteousness are called "stout-hearted" (Isa. 46:12); and in Isaiah 48:4 God says, "Thou art obstinate, and thy neck is an iron sinew, and thy brow brass." This hardness is often ascribed to the neck ("stiffnecked"), a figure of man, s obstinacy taken from refractory oxen which will not accept the yoke. This hardness evidences itself by a complete absence of spiritual sensibility, so that the heart is unmoved by God's goodness, has no awe of His authority and majesty, no fear of His anger and vengeance; a presentation of the joys of heaven or the horrors of hell makes no impression on it. As the prophet of old lamented, they "put far away the evil day" (Amos 6:3), dismissing it from their thoughts as an unwelcome subject. They have no sense of guilt, no consciousness of having offended their Maker, no alarming realization of His impending wrath, but are at ease in their sins. Far from sin being a burden to them, it is their element and delight. Hardness of heart, which was referred to in the preceding chapter, is the perverseness and obstinacy of fallen man's nature, which makes him resolve to continue in sin no matter what be the consequences thereof. It renders him unwilling to be rebuked for his folly, and makes him refuse to be reclaimed from it, whatever methods are used in order thereunto. The Prophet Ezekiel mentioned this hardness of heart in his day, referring to those who had been forewarned by earlier judgments, and were at that very time under the most solemn rebuke of Providence. God had to say of them, "They will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted" (Ezek. 3:7). The Lord Jesus said of them, "We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented" (Matt. 11:17). The most touching entreaties and winsome reasoning will not move the unregenerate to accept what is absolutely necessary for their present peace and final joy. "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely" (Ps. 58:4-5; cf. Acts 7:57). The hearts of the regenerate are docile and pliable, easily bent to God's will, but the hearts of the wicked are wedded to their lusts and impervious to all appeal. There is such unyielding disposition against heavenly things that they do not respond to the most alarming threatenings and thunderings. They will neither be convinced by the most cogent arguments nor won by the most tempting inducements. They are so addicted to self-pleasing that they cannot be persuaded to take Christ's yoke on them. Zechariah 7:11-12 states: "But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent." They are less susceptible to receive any impressions of holiness than granite is to be engraved by the tool of the artificer. They scorn control and refuse to be admonished. They are "a stubborn and rebellious generation" (Ps. 78:8), being subject to neither the law nor the gospel. The doctrines of repentance, self-denial, walking with God, can find no entrance into their hearts. Disordered Affections Writers disagree as to the scope of the affections. It is a moot point both theologically and psychologically whether the desires are included in the affections. In the broadest meaning, the affections may be said to be the sensitive faculty of the soul. As the understanding discerns and judges things, so the affections allure and dispose the soul to or against the objects contemplated. By the affections the soul becomes pleased or displeased with what is known by the bodily senses or contemplated by the mind, and thus if is moved to approve or reject. As distinguished from both the understanding and the affections, the will executes the final decision of the mind or the strongest desire of the affections, carrying it into action. Since the affections pertain to the sensitive side of the soul, we are more conscious of their stirrings than we are of the actions of our minds or wills. We shall employ the term in its widest latitude, including the desires, for

what the appetites are to the body the affections are to the soul. Goodwin likened the desire nature to the stomach. It is an empty void, fitted to receive from without, longing for a satisfying object. Its universal language is "Who will shew us any good?" (Ps. 4:6). Now God Himself is man's chief good, the only One who can afford him real, lasting and full satisfaction. At the beginning He created him in His own likeness, that as the needle touched by the lodestone ever moves northward, so the soul touched with the divine image should turn the understanding, affections and will to Himself. He also placed the soul in a material body, and in this world, fitting each for the other, providing everything necessary for and suited to each part of man's complex being. The desire nature carries the soul's impressions to the creature, originally intended as a means of enjoying God in and by them. The wonders of God's handiwork were meant to be admired, but chiefly as displaying His wisdom. Food was to be eaten and enjoyed, but in order to deepen gratitude for the goodness of the Giver and to supply strength to serve Him. But when man apostatized, his understanding, affections and will were divorced from God, and the exercise of them became directed only by self-love. Originally the Lord sustained and directed the action of human affections toward Himself. Then He withheld that power, and left our first parents on their own footing; in consequence their desires wandered after forbidden joys. They sought their happiness not in communion with their Maker, but in fellowship with the creature. Like their children ever since, they loved and served the creature more than the Creator. The result was disastrous: they became separated from the holy One. That was at once evidenced by their attempt to hide from Him. Had their delight been in God as their chief good, the desire for concealment could not have possessed them. As it was with Adam and Eve, so it has been with all their descendants. Many a proverb expresses that general truth. "The stream cannot rise higher than the fountain." "Men do not gather grapes of thorns, nor figs of thistles." "Like begets like." The parent stock of the human family must send forth scions of its own nature. The hearts and lives of all the unregenerate say to the Almighty, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job 21:14). The natural center of unfallen man's soul for both its rest and delight was the One who gave him being. Therefore David said, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (Ps. 116:7). But sin has caused men to "draw back" from Him, "departing from the living God" (Heb. 10:38; 3:12). God was not only to be the delightful portion of the one whom He had made in His image, but also the ultimate end of all man's motives and actions as he aimed to glorify and please Him in all things. But man forsook "the fountain of living waters" (Jer. 2:13), the infinite and perpetual spring of comfort and joy. And now the inclinations and lusts of man's nature are wholly removed from God, anything and everything being more agreeable to him than He who is the sum of all excellence. Man makes the things of time and sense his chief good, and the pleasing of himself his supreme end. That is why his affections are termed "ungodly lusts" (Jude 18)—they turn man away from God. Man has no relish for His holiness, no desire for fellowship with Him, no wish to retain Him in his thoughts. But what has just been pointed out (the aversion of our affections from God) is only the negative phase. The positive is the conversion of the affections to other things. Thus God charged Israel, "My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" nor give them any satisfaction (Jer. 2:13). All the concern of the natural man is how to live at ease, not how to honor and enjoy God He observes "lying vanities" and forsakes his own mercy (Jonah 2:8). All his expectations are disappointments, empty vanities. Man is deceived by a vain prospect, and the outcome is vexation of spirit, because of frustration. As the love of God shed abroad in the hearts of the redeemed does not seek its own good (I Cor. 13:5), so self-love does nothing but that: "They all look to their own way, every one for his gain" (Isa. 56:11). Not only are the desires of the unregenerate turned away from God to the creature, but they are greedy, excessive. Thus we read of "inordinate affections" (Col. 3:5), which indicate both excess and irregularity, a spirit of gluttony and unmitigated craving for things contrary to God, a "lust after evil things" (I Cor. 10:6).

We see here two sins: intemperance and "pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:12). The body is esteemed above the soul, for all the efforts of the natural man are directed to making provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh; his immortal spirit is little thought of and still less cared for. When things go well for him, he says, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry" (Luke 12:19— His thoughts do not rise to a higher and future life. He is more concerned with the clothing and adorning of the outward man than with the cultivation of a meek and quiet spirit, which is of great value in the sight of God (I Peter 3:4). Earth is preferred before heaven, things of time before eternity. Though death and the grave may put an end to all he has here much sooner than he imagines, yet his heart is so set on his possessions that he will not be diverted from them. Thus it is that the affections, which at the beginning were the servants of reason, now occupy the throne. That which is the glory of human nature elevating it above the beasts of the field—is turned here and there by the rude rabble of our passions. God placed in man an instinct for happiness, so that he could find it in Himself; but now that instinct gropes in the dust and snatches at every vanity. The counsels and contrivances of the mind are engaged in the accomplishment of man's carnal desires. Not only have his affections no relish for spiritual things, but they are strongly prejudiced against them, for they run counter to the gratifying of his corrupt nature. His desires are set on more wealth, more worldly honor and power, more fleshly merriment; and because the gospel contains no promise of such things it is despised. Because it inculcates holiness, mortifying of the flesh, separation from the world, resisting the devil, the gospel is most unwelcome to him. To turn the affections away from those material and temporal things which they have made their chief good, and to turn them to unseen spiritual and eternal things, alienates the carnal mind against the gospel, for it offers nothing attractive to the natural man in place of those idols on which his heart centers. To renounce his own righteousness and be dependent on that of Another is equally distasteful to his pride. The affections are alienated from and opposed to not only the holy requirements of the gospel, but also its mystery. That mystery is what the Scriptures term the hidden wisdom of God, which the natural man not only fails to admire and adore, but regards with contempt. He looks on all of its declarations as empty and unintelligible notions. This prejudice has prevailed among the wise and learned of this world in all ages. The wisdom of God seems foolishness to all who are puffed up by pride in their own intelligence, and what seems foolishness to them is despised and scorned. That which is related to faith rather than reason is unpalatable. Not to trust in their own understanding but in the Lord is most difficult for those of towering intellect. To set aside their own ideas, forsake their thoughts (Isa. 55:7) and become as "little children," and to be told they shall never enter the kingdom of heaven unless they do all this, is most abhorrent to them. No small part of man's depravity consists in his readiness to embrace anti-God prejudices and to tenaciously adhere to them, with total lack of power to extricate himself from them. The disordered state of the affections is seen in the fact that the actions of the natural man are regulated far more by his senses than by his reason. His conduct consists principally in responding to the clamoring of his desires rather than to the dictates of reason. The tendencies of children swiftly turn to any corrupting diversion, but are slow to respond to any improving exercise. They can scarcely be restrained from the one; they have to be compelled to do the other. That the affections are turned away from God is made clear every time His will crosses our desires. This disease appears too in the objects on which the different affections are placed. Instead of love being set on God, it is centered on the world, and dotes on idols. Instead of hatred being directed against sin, it is opposed to holiness. Instead of joy finding its delight in spiritual things, it wastes itself on things which soon pall. Instead of fear being actuated by the displeasure of the Lord, it dreads more the frowns of our fellowmen. If there is grief, it is for the thwarting of our pleasures and hopes, rather than over our waywardness. If there is pity, it is exercised on self, rather than on the sufferings of others. The very first stirring of our lusts is itself evil. The passions or lusts are those natural and unrestrained

motives of the creature for the advancement of its nature, inclining to those things which promote its good, and avoiding those which are harmful. They are to the soul what wings are to the bird and sails to the ship. Desire, always in pursuit of satisfaction, must be regulated by right reason. But reason has been dethroned and man's passions and inclinations are lawless; therefore their earliest stirrings after forbidden objects are essentially evil. This was, as Matthew S shows, denied by the rabbis, who restricted sin to open and outward transgression. But our Lord declared that unwarrantable anger against another was incipient murder, that to look on a woman with lust was a breach of the seventh commandment, that impure thoughts and wanton imaginations were nothing less than adultery. Hence Scripture speaks of "deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22), "foolish and hurtful lusts" (I Tim. 6:9), "worldly lusts" (Titus 2:12), "fleshly lusts, which war against the soul" (I Peter 2:11), "ungodly lusts" (Jude 18). The very first stirring of desire after anything evil, the slightest irregularity in the motives of the soul, is sin. This is clear from the universal command "Thou shalt not covet," that is, hanker after anything which God has prohibited. This irregular and evil longing is called "concupiscence" in Romans 7:8, by which the apostle meant mental as well as sensual desire. The Greek word is usually rendered "lust"; in I Thessalonians 4:5 it is found in an intensified form: "the lust of concupiscence." These lustings of the soul are its initial motions, often unsuspected by ourselves, which precede the consent of the mind, and are designated "evil concupiscence" (Col. 3:5). They are the seeds from which our evil works spring, the original stirrings of our indwelling corruption. They are condemned by the law of God, for the tenth commandment forbids the first outgoings of the affections after what belongs to another. That incipient longing, before the approbation of the mind is obtained, is sinful, and needs to be confessed to God. Genesis 6:5 declares of fallen man that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart" is evil, for sins even in their embryonic stage defile the soul, being contrary to that purity which the holiness of God requires. The Council of Trent denied that the original movement of the soul tending to evil is in itself sinful, stating that it only becomes so when it is consented or yielded to. Now it is freely confessed by all sound Calvinists that the mind's entertaining of the first evil desire is a further degree of sin, and that the actual assent to the desire is yet more heinous; but they emphatically contend that the original impulse is also evil in the sight of God. If the original impulse is innocent per se, how could its gratification be sinful? Motives and excitements do not undergo any change in their essential nature in consequence of their being humored or encouraged. It cannot be wrong to respond to innocent impulses. The Lord Jesus teaches us to judge the tree by its fruit; if the fruit is corrupt, so too is the tree which bears it. In Romans 7: 7 the term is actually rendered sin: "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." Here, then, sin and lust are used interchangeably; any inward nonconformity to the law is sinful. Paul was made aware of that fact when the commandment was applied to him in power—as the sun shining on refuse draws forth its stench. Men may deny that the very desire for forbidden objects is culpable, but Scripture affirms that even imaginations are the evil buds of wickedness, for they are contrary to that rectitude of heart which the law requires. Note how that terrible list of things which Christ enumerated as issuing from the heart of fallen man is headed with "evil thoughts" (Matt. 15:19). We cannot conceive of any inclination or proneness to sin in an absolutely holy being. Certainly there was none in the Lord Jesus: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). There was nothing in Christ that was capable of responding to Satan's vile solicitations, no movement of His appetites or affections of which he could take advantage. Christ was inclined only to what is good. "For when we were in the flesh [i.e., while Christians were in their unregenerate state], the motions of sins [literally, the affections of sin, or the beginnings of our passions], which were [aggravated] by the law, did work in our members [the faculties of the soul as well as of the body] to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5). Those "affections of sin" are the filthy streams which issue from the polluted fountain of our hearts. They are the first stirrings of our fallen nature

which precede the overt acts of transgression. They are the unlawful movements of our desire prior to the studied and deliberate thoughts of the mind after sin. "But sin [indwelling corruption], taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" or "evil lustings" (Rom. 7:8). Note that word "wrought in me": there was a polluted disposition or evil propensity at work, distinct from the deeds which it produced. Indwelling sin is a powerful principle, constantly exercising a bad influence, stimulating unholy affections, stirring to avarice, enmity, malice and countless other evils. The popular idea which now prevails is that nothing is sinful except an open and outward transgression. Such a concept falls far short of the searching and humbling teaching of Holy Writ. It affirms that the source of all temptation lies within fallen man himself. The depravity of his own heart induces him to listen to the devil or be influenced by the profligacy of others. If this were not so, no external solicitations to wrongdoing would have any force, for there would be nothing within man for them to excite, nothing to which those solicitations correspond or over which they could exert any power. An evil example would be rejected with abhorrence if we were pure within. There must be an unsatisfied lust to which temptation from without appeals. Where there is no desire for food, a well-spread table does not allure. If there is no love of acquisition, gold cannot attract the heart. In every instance the force of temptation lies in some propensity of our fallen nature. The uniqueness of the Bible lies in its exalted spirituality, insisting that any inward bias, the least gravitation of the soul from God and His will, is sinful and culpable, whether or not it is carried into action. It reveals that the first stirring of sin itself is to draw away the soul from what it ought to be fixed upon, by an irregular craving for some foreign object which appears delightful. When our native corruptions are invited by something external which promises pleasure or profit, and the passions are attracted by it, then temptation begins, and the heart is drawn out after it. Since fallen man is influenced most by his lusts, they sway both his mind and his will. So powerful are they that they rule his whole soul: "I see another law in my members" (Rom. 7:23). It is an imperious law, dominating the entire man. It is because their lusts are so violent that men are so mad upon sinning: "They...weary themselves to commit iniquity" (Jer. 9:5). James 1:14-15 traces the origin of all our sinning: "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished bringeth forth death." Those words show that sin encroaches on the spirit by degrees; they describe the several stages before it is consummated in the outward act. They reveal that the procreating cause of all sin lies in the lusts of every man's soul; he has within himself both the food and fuel for it. Goodwin declared: "You can never come to see how deeply and how abominably corrupt creatures you are, until God opens your eyes to see your lusts." The old man is "corrupt according to the deceitful lusts" (Eph. 4:22). Lust is both the womb and the root of all wickedness on earth. The apostle to God's people spoke of "having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:4). "The corruption": that wasting destroying blight which is on all mankind. "Which is in the world": like poison in the cup, like dry rot in wood, like an epidemic in the air—inherent, ineradicable. It taints every part of man's being, physical, mental and moral; it affects all his relations of life, whether in the family, society or the State. "Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust." When men are tempted they usually try to place the onus on God, the devil, or their fellowmen; actually the blame rests entirely on themselves. First, their affections are removed from what is good and they are incited to wrongful conduct by their corrupt inclinations, attracted to the bait which Satan or the world dangles before them. "Lust" here signifies a yearning for, or longing to obtain, something. And it is so strong that it draws the soul after a forbidden object. The Greek word for "drawn away" means forcibly impelled. The impetuous violence of the desire which covets some sensual or worldly thing demands gratification. This is nothing but a species of self-will, a hankering after what God has not granted, rising from discontent with our present condition or position. Even though that longing is a fleeting and involuntary one, perhaps against our best judgment, nevertheless it is sinful and, when

allowed, produces yet deeper guilt. "And enticed": The drawing away is because of the irregularity and vehemence of the craving; the enticement is from the object contemplated. But that very allurements is something for which we are to blame. It is because we fail to resist, hate and reject the first rising of unlawful desire, but instead entertain and encourage it, that the bait appears so attractive. The temptation promises pleasure or profit, which shows "the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb. 3:13). All this beguiles us. Then wickedness is sweet in our mouth, and we hide it under our tongue (Job. 20:12). "Then when lust hath conceived": Anticipated delight is cherished, and the mind fully consents. The sinful deed is now present in embryo, and the thoughts are busied in contriving ways and means of gratification. "It bringeth forth sin" by a decree of the will: What was previously contemplated is now actually perpetrated. Manton said: "Sin knows no mother but our own heart." "And sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death": We pay its wages and reap what was planted, damnation being the ultimate outcome. This is the progress of sin within us, and these are its degrees of enormity.

Corrupted Conscience If there is one faculty of man's soul which might be thought to have retained the original image of God on it, it is surely the conscience. Such a view has indeed been widely held. Not a few of the most renowned philosophers and moralists have contended that conscience is nothing less than the divine voice itself speaking in the innermost part of our being. Without minimizing the great importance and value of this internal monitor, either in its office or in its operations, it must be emphatically declared that such theorists err, that even this faculty has not escaped from the common ruin of our entire beings. This is evident from the plain teaching of God's Word. Scripture speaks of a "weak conscience" (I Cor. 8:12), of men "having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:2)— It says that their "conscience is defiled" (Titus 1:15), that they have "an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22)— Let us examine the point more closely. Those who affirm that there is something essentially good in the natural man insist that his conscience is an enemy to evil and a friend to holiness. They stress the fact that the conscience produces an inward conviction against wrongdoing, a conflict in the heart over sin, a reluctance to commit it. They call attention to Pharaoh's acknowledgment of sin (Exodus 10:16), and to Darius' being "sorely displeased with himself" for his unjust act in condemning Daniel to be thrown into the lions' den (6:14). Some have even gone so far as to affirm that the opposition to greater and grosser crimes—which is found at first in all men—differs little or not at all from that conflict between the flesh and the spirit described in Romans 7:21-23. But such a sophistry is easily refuted. In the first place, while it is true that fallen man possesses a general notion of right and wrong, and is able in some instances to distinguish between good and evil, yet while he remains unregenerate that moral instinct never causes him to truly delight in the former or to really abhor the latter. In whatever measure he may approve of good or disapprove of evil, it is from no consideration for God. Conscience is only able to work according to the light it has; and since the natural man cannot discern spiritual things (I Cor. 2:14), it is useless in respect to them. How feeble is its light! It is more like the glimmer of a candle than the rays of the sun—merely sufficient to make the darkness visible. Owing to the darkened condition of the understanding, the conscience is fearfully ignorant. When it does discover that which is adverse, it indicates it feebly and ineffectually. Instead of directing the senses, it mostly confuses. How true this is in the case of the uncivilized. Conscience gives them a sense of guilt and then puts them to practicing the most abominable and often inhuman rites. It has induced them to invent and propagate the most impious misrepresentations of Deity. As a salve to their conscience, they often make the very objects of their worship the precedents and patrons of their favorite vices. The fact is that conscience is so sadly defective that it is unable to perform its duty until God enlightens, awakens and renews it. Its operations are equally faulty. Not only is conscience defective in vision, but its voice is very weak. How strongly it ought to upbraid us for our shocking ingratitude to our great Benefactor! How loudly it should remonstrate against the stupid neglect of our spiritual interests and eternal welfare. Yet it does neither the one nor the other.

Though it offers some checks on outward and gross sins, it makes no resistance to the subtler secret workings of indwelling corruption. If it prompts to the performance of duty, it ignores the most important and spiritual part of that duty. It may be uneasy if we fail to spend the usual amount of time each day in private prayer, but it is little concerned about our reverence, humility, faith and fervor in prayer. Those in Malachi's day were guilty of offering God defective sacrifices, yet conscience never troubled them about it (1:7-8). Conscience may be scrupulous in carrying out the precepts of men or our personal inclinations, yet utterly neglect those things which the Lord has commanded; like the Pharisees who would not eat food while their hands remained ceremonially unwashed, yet disregarded what God had commanded (Mark 7 6-9). Conscience is woefully partial, disregarding favorite sins and excusing those which most besiege us. All such attempts to excuse our faults are founded on ignorance of God, of ourselves, of our duty. Otherwise conscience would bring in the verdict of guilty. Conscience often joins with our lusts to encourage a wicked deed. Saul's conscience told him not to offer sacrifice till Samuel came, yet to please the people and prevent them from deserting him he did so. And when that servant of God reproved him, the king tried to justify his offense by saying that the Philistines were gathered together against Israel, and that he dared not attack them before calling on God: "I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt-offering" (I Sam. 13:8-12). Conscience will strain to find some consideration with which to appease itself and approve of the evil act. Even when rebuking certain sins, it will find motives and discover inducements to them. Thus, when Herod was about to commit the dastardly murder of John the Baptist, which was against his convictions, his conscience came to his aid and urged him forward by impressing on him that he must not violate the oath which he had taken before others (Mark 6:26). Conscience often ignores great sins while condoning lesser ones, as Saul was hard upon the Israelites for a breach of the ceremonial law (I Sam. 14:33) but made no scruple of killing eighty-five of the Lord's priests. Conscience will even devise arguments which favor the most outrageous acts; thus it is not only like a corrupt lawyer pleading an evil cause, but like a corrupt judge justifying the wicked. Those who clamored for the crucifixion of Christ did so under the pretext of its being orderly and necessary: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God" (John 19:7). Little wonder that the Lord says of men that they "call evil good, and good evil;... put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20). Conscience never moves the natural man to perform duties out of gratitude and thankfulness to God. It never convicts him of the heavy guilt of Adam's offense which is lying upon his soul, nor of lack of faith in Christ. It allows sinners to sleep in peace in their awful unbelief. But theirs is not a sound and solid peace, for there is no ground for it; rather it is the false security of ignorance. Says God of them, "They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness" (Hosea 7:2). The accusations of conscience are ineffectual, for they produce no good fruit, yielding neither meekness, humility nor genuine repentance, but rather a dread of God as a harsh Judge or hatred of Him as an inexorable enemy. Not only are its accusations ineffectual, but often they are quite erroneous. Because of the darkness upon the understanding, the moral perception of the natural man greatly errs. As Thomas Boston said of the corrupt conscience, "So it is often found like a mad and furious horse, which violently runs down himself, his rider, and all that come in his way." A fearful example of that appears in our Lord's prediction in John 16:2 which received repeated fulfillment in the Acts: "They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." In like manner Saul of Tarsus after his conversion acknowledged: "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). The unrenewed conscience is a most unreliable guide. Even when the conscience of the unregenerate is awakened by the immediate hand of God and is struck with deep and painful conviction of sin, far from its moving the soul to seek the mercy of God through the Mediator, it fills him with futility and dismay. As Job 6:4 declares, when the arrows of the Almighty strike a

man, their poison drinks up his spirit as the terrors of God set themselves to war against him. Formerly this man may have gone to great pains to stifle the accusations of his inward judge, but now he cannot. Instead, conscience rages and roars, putting the whole man in dreadful consternation, as he is terrified by a sense of the wrath of a holy God and the fiery indignation which shall devour His adversaries. This fills him with such horror and despair that instead of turning to the Lord he tries to flee from Him. Thus it was in the case of Judas who, when he was made to realize the awful gravity of his vile deed, went out and hanged himself. That the guilt of sin within the natural man causes him to turn from rather than to Christ was demonstrated by the Pharisees in John 8:9. They, "being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one." Disabled will The will is not the lord but the servant of the other faculties executing the strongest conviction of the mind or the most imperious command of our lusts, for there can be but one dominating influence in the will at one and the same time. Originally the excellence of man's will consisted in following the guidance of right reason and submitting to the influence of proper authority. But in Eden man's will rejected the former and rebelled against the latter, and in consequence of the fall his will has ever since been under the control of an understanding which prefers darkness to light and of affections which crave evil rather than good. Thus the fleeting pleasures of sense and the puny interests of time excite our wishes, while the lasting delights of godliness and the riches of immortality receive little or no attention. The will of the natural man is biased by his corruption, for his inclinations gravitate in the opposite direction from his duty; therefore he is in complete bondage to sin, impelled by his lusts. The unregenerate are not merely unwilling to seek after holiness; they inveterately hate it. Since the will turned traitor to God and entered the service of Satan, it has been completely paralyzed toward good. Said the Saviour, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (John 6:44). And why is it that man cannot come to Christ by his own natural powers? Because not only has he no inclination to do so, but the Saviour repels him; His yoke is unwelcome, His scepter repulsive. In connection with the spiritual things the condition of the will is like that of the woman in Luke 13:11 who "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself." If such is the case, then how can man be said to act voluntarily? Because he freely chooses the evil, and that because "the soul of the wicked desireth evil" (Prov. 21:10), always carrying out that desire except when prevented by divine restraint. Man is the slave of his corruption, like a wild colt; from earliest childhood he is averse to restraint. The will of man is uniformly rebellious against God. When Providence thwarts his desires, instead of bowing in humble resignation, he frets with disquietude and acts like a wild bull in a net. Only the Son can make him "free" (John 8:36), for there is "liberty" only where His Spirit is (II Cor. 3:17). Here, then, are the ramifications of human depravity. The fall has blinded man's mind, hardened his heart, disordered his affections, corrupted his conscience, disabled his will, so that there is "no soundness" in him (Isa. 1:6), "no good thing" in him (Rom. 7:18).

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