

The Total Depravity of Man Chapter 7 IMPACT

by A.W. Pink

Transcript

The Total Depravity of Man

Chapter 7

IMPACT

There are many scriptural names for original sin, or the depravity of human nature, which serve to cast light upon it. The following list probably contains the most significant ones. Sin is called the plague of the heart (I Kings 8:38), foolishness bound up in the heart (Prov. 22:15), "the stony heart" (Ezek. 11:19), "the evil treasure" of the heart (Matt. 12:35). It is designated "the poison of asps" (Rom 3:13), "the old man," because it is derived from the first man and is part and parcel of us since the beginning of our own existence, and "the body of sin" (Rom. 6:6), for it is an assortment of evils, the "sin that dwelleth in me" (Rom. 7:17). It is labeled "another law in my members" (Rom. 7:23) because of its unvarying nature and power, "the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2), "the carnal mind" which is "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). It is frequently spoken of as "the flesh" (Gal. 5:17) because conveyed by natural generation, "the old man, which is corrupt" (Eph. 4:22), "the sin which doth so easily beset us" (Heb. 12:1), man's "own lust" (James 1:14), which inclines him to evil deeds. It should be quite plain from our definitions and descriptions of congenital sin that the human constitution is not merely negatively defective, but positively depraved. There are in man's heart not only the lack of conformity to the divine law but a deformity. Not only is the natural man without any desire for holiness; he is born with a disposition which is now radically opposed to it. Therefore he not only has no love for God, but is full of enmity against Him. Sin is also likened to "leaven" (I Cor. 5:6-7). Sin is not only the absence of beauty, but the presence of horrid ugliness; not simply the unlovely, but the hateful; not only the want of order, but real disorder. As "righteousness" expresses objectively the qualities which constitute what is good, and "holiness" the subjective state which is the root of righteousness, so sin includes not only outward acts of transgression, but the evil and rotten state of the whole inner man which inclines to and animates those external iniquities. Very far from being only an "infirmity," indwelling sin is a loathsome disease. Subjection to Spiritual Death In seeking to define and describe the nature of depravity from the positive side, we would say, first, that the fall has brought man's soul into subjection to death. For the soul to be under the dominion of death is a very different thing from the body being so. When the body dies it becomes as inactive and insensible as a stone. Not so in the case of the soul, for it still retains its vitality and all its powers. Fallen man is a rational, moral, responsible agent; but his internal being is thoroughly deranged. Alienated from the life of God, he can neither think nor will, love nor hate, in conformity to the divine rule. All the faculties of the soul are in full

operation, but they are all unholy. Consequently man can no more fulfill the design of his being than does a physical corpse. The analogies between the two are dreadful and solemn. As a dead body is devoid of the principle which formerly vitalized it, so the soul has been abandoned by the Holy Spirit who once inhabited it. A physical corpse rapidly becomes a mass of corruption and repulsion. Thus is the depraved soul of man to the thrice holy God. As a lifeless body is incapable of renewing itself, so is the spiritually dead soul completely powerless to better itself. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1). As John Gill said, "The design of the apostle in this and some following verses, is to show the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and to set forth the sad estate and condemnation of man by nature, and to magnify the riches of the grace of God, and represent the exceeding greatness of His power by conversion." In Ephesians 1:19 Paul prayed that saints might duly apprehend and appreciate the greatness of that power which had been exercised by God in their salvation, and that they might understand that it was precisely the same divine might as that put forth for the resurrection and exaltation of His Son. That same power had now worked a like change in them; the mighty power which had quickened Christ had also quickened them. The blessed scope and purpose of the Holy Spirit here was to bring out the answerable parallel or show the similar change which God had so wonderfully wrought in them. What had been effected for Christ their Head had been accomplished also in them His members, the one work being a glorious pattern of the other. In connection with Christ's exaltation three things were conspicuous. First, the condition of humiliation and death from which He was delivered and raised. Second, the sublime state of life and honor to which He was exalted. Third, the Author, God, whose almighty power was eminently manifested by the vast difference between those two states. There is a vast difference between the glorious miracles described in the closing verses of Ephesians i and what is so graphically portrayed in the opening verses of chapter 2. There we see the dreadful state in which God's elect were by nature, namely, that of death in sin. This death brought its subjects under complete bondage to sin and Satan, so that they did not walk in conformity to the divine law, but according to the corrupt maxims and customs of the world. They were not guided by the Holy Spirit, but energized and directed by the evil spirit, here named "the prince of the power of the air." Without any regard for God's will or concern for His glory, they gave free reign to the lusts of the flesh and the desires of their carnal minds. But notwithstanding their horrible condition, God, who is rich in mercy, raised them from the grave of sin and made them one with Christ in the heavenlies, by a vital and indissoluble union. This marvel had been effected solely by the invincible power and amazing grace of God, without any cooperation of theirs. That death which has come upon man's soul is at least a threefold one. First, he is dead in law, like a murderer in the condemned cell awaiting execution. Second, he is dead vitally, without a single spark of spiritual life. Thus he is totally dead to God and holiness, cast out of His favor, without any power to recover it. He is dead in opposition to justification, and also dead in opposition to being regenerated and sanctified. Third, he is dead to all that is excellent. As "life" is not simply existence but well-being, so "death" is not the negation of existence, but the absence of all the real pleasures of existence. In its scriptural sense life signifies happiness and blessedness; death means wretchedness and woe. As the utmost natural misery which can befall man is for him to die—for "a living dog is better than a dead lion" (Eccles. 9:4)—so spiritual death is the strongest expression to describe our moral wretchedness. Natural death divests man of all those characteristics which are proper to him as man; but spiritual death makes him worse, without any comeliness in the sight of God, and a stench in His nostrils. In Ephesians 2:1-3, Goodwin stated, "there is an exact description of the state of man by nature, so complete and compendious a one as is nowhere together, that I know, in the whole Book of God." The Holy Spirit has placed special emphasis on the words "dead in sin," for in verse 5 He repeats them. Three things are outstanding in sin: its guilt, its pollution and its power; and in each of those respects man is in his natural state "dead in sin." "Thou art

but a dead man," said God to Abimelech (Gen. 20:3); that is, "You are guilty of death by reason of this act of yours." It is said of Ephraim that "when he offended in Baal, he died"; sentence of condemnation came upon him (Hosea 13:1). So it is of sin's pollution, for in Hebrews 6:1 we read of "repentance from dead works," because every deed the natural man performs issues from a principle of corruption. So too of sin's power, for every sin man commits disables him more from doing good. His very activity in sin is his death, and the more lively he is in sin the more dead will he become toward God. That there is such a threefold death of which fallen man is the subject is further evident from the nature of the work of grace in the elect, for their spiritual death must correspond to their spiritual quickening, which is clearly threefold. There is, first, a life of justification from the guilt of sin and from the condemnation and curse of the law—termed by Christ as passing from death to life (John 5:24), and by the apostle as "justification of life" (Rom. 5:18). This is entirely objective, having respect to our status or standing before God, and is a greater relative change than for a condemned murderer to receive pardon. Second, there is a life of regeneration from the power and dominion of sin, called by Christ being "born again" (John 3:3), when a new nature or principle of holiness is communicated. This is wholly subjective, having respect to the change wrought in the soul when it is divinely quickened. Third, there is a life of sanctification from the pollution of sin, promised by God through the prophet: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezek. 36:25). This is something experiential, consisting of the purifying of the heart from the love of sin. It is referred to as "the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). The first is judicial, the second spiritual, and the third moral; the three comprise the principal parts of God's so-great salvation, the glorification of the saint being yet future.

Bondage to Sin

Second, the fall has brought man into hopeless bondage to sin. When the Holy Spirit assures the saints, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14), He necessarily means that all those still under the covenant of works are beneath sin's dominion, that it holds full sway over them. As the Lord Jesus declared, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin" (John 8:34); that is to say, sin is his master. Nevertheless, he yields voluntary and ready submission to sin's orders: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). No one coerces and compels them. The dominion of sin is not even an indwelling force against the will of those who are under it, but it is natural and congenial to them. Even though, occasionally, conscience feebly protests, its voice is silenced by the clamorings of lust, to which the will freely complies. The dominion of sin over the natural man is entire, for it pervades the spirit with all its powers, the soul with all its faculties, the body with all its members, at all times and under all circumstances. Sin is likened to a monarch ruling over his subjects: "as sin hath reigned unto death" (Rom. 5:21). Its kingdom is worldwide, for all the children of Adam are its subjects. Sin occupies the throne of the human heart until almighty grace deposes it. Sin has taken possession of the complete person, which constantly acts under its direction and influence. The mind is in subjection to evil as a governing principle which determines all its volitions and acts, for sin's lustings are so many imperial and imperious edicts. Yet this rule of sin is not a force upon the mind to which it makes opposition, for the soul is a subject—as a king continues to occupy the throne only by the consent and free allegiance of his subjects. While the soul cannot help but will evil because of the reign of sin, still its volitions are spontaneous. The dominion of sin consists in its determining influence upon the will, and it retains this sway to the end, unless victorious grace makes a conquest of the soul by the implantation of a contrary principle, which opposes the influence of indwelling sin and disposes the will to contrary acts. Though conscience may remonstrate sharply against the fatal choice, sin still regulates the decisions and deeds of the natural man. Brine stated that this dominion of sin ...is not a propensity to some particular evil, but an inclination to deviate from the rule of our duty taken in its full compass. Yet, as the mind is

incapable of exerting itself in all manner of ways and about all sorts of objects at once and in one instant, it is sometimes acting in one manner and sometimes in another as it is variously affected by the different objects about which it is conversant; but all its actions are evil. And those who study their hearts most will best understand the surprising variety of ways wherein evil concupiscence acts its part in the soul. In the several stages of human life this sway of sin discovers itself. In childhood, by folly proper to that age. In youth it exerts itself in various ways: by a low ambition, pride, and a strange fondness for sinful pleasures. In the state of manhood, by a pursuit of the transitory things of this world, and this is often under specious pretences of more extensive usefulness: but, in fact, men are acted upon by a spirit of covetousness. In an advanced age, by impatience....

The dominion of sin is made to appear more plainly and openly in some than in others, by their following a course of gross and corrupt evil, though it is just as real and great in those whose wickedness is more confined to the mind and heart. Scripture speaks not only of the "filthiness of the flesh," but also of "the spirit" (II Cor. 7:1), that is, vile imaginations, envy, hatred of others, inward rebellion, and ragings against God when His will crosses ours. The sovereign God permits and controls the direction and form this dominion takes in each one. Today the power and reign of sin are more manifest in the world than they have ever been. Not because human nature has undergone any deterioration, for that is impossible—it has been rotten to the core since the time of Cain and Abel. No, rather because God is increasingly removing His restraining hand, thereby allowing the horrid corruption of men's hearts to become more visible and obvious. There are indeed degrees of wickedness, but not in the root from which it proceeds. Every man's nature is equally depraved, and everyone in an unregenerate state is wholly dominated by sin. So mighty is the power of sin that it has made all the sons of men its slaves. Few indeed realize that they are held fast by the cords of their sin (Prov. 5:22), and still fewer realize where its strength lies. Carnality, stemming from sin, is a powerful thing in itself, for it has a will of its own (John 1:13), a mind of its own (Rom. 8:6-7), passions (Rom. 1:24; 7:5). First Corinthians 15:56 informs us, "The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law." The first part of that statement is obvious, but the second calls for some explanation. Sin is manifestly what puts venom into the dart of death and gives it its power to hurt and kill. Sin brought death into the world; had there been no sin, there would have been no death. It is sin, unpardoned sin, which makes death so dreadful, for not only does it put a final end to all its pleasures, but it conducts its subjects to certain judgment. But wherein is the law of God "the strength of sin"? The law is "holy, and just, and good" (Rom. 7:12); how then can it be the strength of that which is corrupt, evil and abominable? Most assuredly the law does not give the slightest encouragement to sin; rather it sternly forbids it. The law is not the essential but the accidental strength of sin, because of sin's inherent depravity, as the pure rays of the sun result in the horrid steam and noxious stench rising from decaying flesh. As the presence of an enemy calls into exercise the malice which lies dormant in the heart, so the holy requirements of the law presenting themselves before man's corrupt heart stir it to active opposition. Thus the exceeding sinfulness of sin is all the more demonstrated, for its potency to evil is drawn forth by any restraint being laid upon it. Though fire and water are opposite elements, that fact is not so evident while there is distance between them; but let them meet together, and there will be great spluttering and striving between them. If the heart of man were pure, the law would be acceptable; but since it is depraved, there is fierce resentment against the spiritual precepts of the law. As the law makes no provision for pardon, the natural effect of guilt is to widen the breach between the sinner and God. Aware (as in some measure the most degraded are) of divine displeasure, the sinner is prone to withdraw farther and farther from the divine presence. Every augmentation of guilt is an augmentation of estrangement. The more the sinner sins, the wider becomes the gulf between himself and God. This gives strength to sin. It provokes the malignity of the heart against the law, against all holy order, against the Judge. It incites

the spirit of rebellion to unwonted fierceness, and makes the sinner desperate in his sin. It causes its subjects to become increasingly reckless and, as they realize the brevity of life, to plunge more eagerly into profligacy. As frosty weather causes a fire to burn more fiercely, so the law increases man's enmity against God. Saul of Tarsus found it so in his experience. The divine prohibition "Thou shalt not covet" was applied in power to his heart, and he tells us, "Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiscence" (Rom. 7:7-8). Blindness of Heart Third, the fall has brought man's mind into darkness. As physical blindness is one of the greatest natural calamities, spiritual blindness is much more so. It consists not in universal ignorance, but in total incapacity to take in a real knowledge of divine things. As it is said of the Jews, "Blindness in part is happened to Israel" (Rom. 11:25). Men may become very learned in many things, and by focusing their minds upon the Scriptures they may acquire considerable literal knowledge of its contents; but they are quite unable to obtain a vital and effectual knowledge of them. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Cor. 2:14); and he has no spiritual perception. This darkness which is upon the mind makes the natural man incapable of perceiving the excellence of God, the perfection of His law, the real nature of sin, or his dire need of a Saviour. Should the Lord draw near and ask him, "What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?" his answer ought to be "Lord, that I might receive my sight" (Mark 10:51). This darkness is upon the noblest part of man's being, his soul; and upon the highest faculty of it, the mind, which performs the same office for it as does the eye for the body. By means of our visual organ we observe material objects, distinguish between them, recognize their beauty or repulsiveness. By the mind we think, reason, understand, weigh and discern between the true and the false. Since the mind occupies so high a place in the scale of our beings, and since it is the most active of our inward faculties, ever working, then what a fearful state for the soul to be blind! John Flavel said it is "like a fiery, high-mettled horse whose eyes cannot see, furiously carrying his rider upon rocks, pits and dangerous precipices." Or, as the Son of God declared, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:22-23). Much is said in the Scriptures about this terrible affliction. Men are represented as groping at noonday (Deut. 28:29). "They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noonday as in the night" (Job 5:14). "They know not, neither will they understand." And why? "They walk on in darkness" (Ps. 82:5). It cannot be otherwise. Alienated from Him who is light, they must be in total spiritual darkness. "The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:19). They are insensible of the very things which are leading to everlasting woe. Moral depravity inevitably results in moral darkness. As a physically blind eye shuts out all natural light, so the blinded eye of the soul excludes all spiritual light. It renders the Scriptures profitless. In this respect the case of the Gentiles is identical with that of the Jews: "But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same vail untaken away in the reading of the old testament" (II Cor. 3:14). Consequently the highest wisdom they call foolish, and objects which are the most glorious and attractive are despised and rejected by them. It is a great mistake to suppose that depravity is confined to the heart or to any one faculty which is closely connected with the distinction between right and wrong. As a grave disease extends its influence to all the functions of the body, so depravity extends to all the powers of the soul. Sin is as really blindness to the mind as it is hardness to the heart; therefore the heart has departed from its original tendencies. Its actions, however intense, are only in the wrong direction. This explains the mental aberrations of men and the immoral conceptions they have formed of Deity. As we attempt to contemplate the manifold forms of ancient and modern religious error, the various superstitions, the disgusting rites of worship, the monstrous and hideous symbols of the Godhead, the cruel flagellations and obscenities which prevail in

heathen lands; when we consider all the abominations which have been committed in the name of divine worship, we ask how such delusions originated and have been propagated. It is not sufficient to trace them to sin in general; they must be attributed to a deranged mind. Only a debased and darkened understanding adequately accounts for the horrible lies which have taken the name of truth, and the fearful blasphemies which have been styled worship. This moral darkness which is upon the mind appears in the speculations about Deity by philosophers and metaphysicians, for they are erroneous, defective and degrading, when not corrected by divine revelation. All such speculations are necessarily vain when they attempt to deal with things which transcend the scope of our faculties—things which undertake to carry knowledge beyond its first principles—and try to comprehend the incomprehensible. The creature being dependent and finite can never hope to compass an absolute knowledge of anything. J. H. Thornwell said: Intelligence begins with principles that must be accepted and not explained; and in applying those principles to the phenomena of existence, apparent contradictions constantly emerge that require patience and further knowledge to resolve them. But the mind, anxious to know all and restless under doubts and uncertainty, is tempted to renounce the first principles of reason and to contradict the facts which it daily observes. It seeks consistency of thought, and rather than any gaps should be left unfilled it plunges everything into hopeless confusion. Instead of accepting the laws of intelligence and patiently following the light of reason, and submitting to ignorance where ignorance is the lot of his nature as limited and finite, and joyfully receiving the partial knowledge which is his earthly inheritance, man under the impulse of curiosity, had rather make a world that he does understand than admit one which he cannot comprehend. When he cannot stretch himself to the infinite dimensions of truth, he contracts truth to his own little measure. This is what the apostle means by vanity of mind.

The only way of escape for fallen man from such vanity of mind is for him to reject the serpent's poison, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil," and submit unreservedly to divine revelation, according to our Lord's word in Matthew 11:25: "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Man must renounce all self-acquired knowledge, forsake all his own erroneous conclusions and fancies, and take the place of a little child before Him. But that is just what the pride of the depraved creature refuses to do. Sin has not only counteracted the normal development of reason; it has so deranged the mind that men love darkness rather than light (John 3:19). They are so infatuated with their delusions that they prefer error to the truth. That which may be known about God is clearly manifested on every hand, yet men refuse to see. But the light still shines all around them, though they are carried away with the darkness of their corruption. As created, all men may and ought to know God; as fallen, practical atheism is their sad heritage. The highest intellects of men, in their fallen and degenerate condition, could not of themselves form any accurate or just speculative knowledge of God and His government. Yet there is a profounder ignorance which requires notice, namely, that theoretical knowledge of God which is common in those countries that have been favored with the gospel. By the light of the Christian revelation many a humble, uneducated person has been made familiar with truths of which Plato and Aristotle knew nothing. Thousands of people are sound on questions which perplexed and confounded the understandings of presumptuous sophists. They believe that God is spirit: personal, eternal and independent; that He made the heavens and the earth, and controls all His creatures and all their actions. They are persuaded that He is as infinitely good as He is infinitely great. Yet in spite of this knowledge they do not glorify Him as God. They lack that loving light which warms as well as convinces. They have no communion with Him; they neither love nor adore Him. In order to have a spiritual, vital and transforming knowledge of God their dead hearts must be quickened and their blind eyes opened. And in order for that there must be an atonement, a reconciliation with God. The cross is the only place where men can truly find God, and the incarnate Son the only One in whom

God can be adequately known. If man's mind were not enveloped by darkness, he would not be deceived by Satan's lies nor allured by his bait. If man were not in total spiritual darkness, he would never cherish the delusion that the filthy rags of his own righteousness could make him acceptable to the holy One. If he were not blind, he would perceive that his very prayers are an abomination to the Lord (Prov. 15:8). Though this incapability of understanding heavenly things is common to all the unregenerate, it is more heightened in some than in others. All are equally under the dominion of sin, yet some forge themselves additional fetters of evil habits by drinking iniquity like water. Many of the sons of men immerse themselves in greater darkness by the strong prejudices of their own making, through pride and self-will. Others are still further incapacitated to take in spiritual things, even theoretically, by God's judicial act of giving them over wholly to follow the dictates of their own minds. "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted" (John 12:40; cf. II Thess. 2:10-12). Subjugation to Satan Fourth, the fall has issued in man's becoming the bondsman of Satan. That is another mysterious but very real thing, about which we can know nothing except what is revealed in Holy Writ; but its teaching leaves us in no doubt about the fact. It reveals that men are morally the devil's children (Acts 13:10; I John 3:10), that they are his captives (II Tim. 2:26) and under his power (Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13), that they are determined to do what he wants (John 8:44). He is described as the strong man armed, who holds undisputed possession of the sinner's soul, until a stronger than he dispossesses him (Luke 11:21-22). It speaks of men being "oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38), and declares, "The god of this world [the inspirer and director of its false religions] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image [Revealer] of God, should shine unto them" (II Cor. 4:4). The heart of fallen man is the throne on which Satan reigns, and all the sons of Adam are naturally inclined to yield themselves slaves to him. The awful reality of his enslaving men was authenticated beyond the possibility of doubt by the cases of demoniacal possession in Christ's day. The corrupt nature of men gives Satan the greatest advantage against them, for they are as ready to comply as he is to tempt. No age or condition of life is exempted from his assaults. He adapts his evil solicitations according to their varied temperaments and tempers, and they are easily overcome. The longer he rules over men the more guilt they contract, and the more they come under his dominion. To be his bondsman is to be in a state of abject misery, for he purposes the eternal ruin of his victims, and every step they take in that direction furthers his evil designs and increases their wretchedness. He is as ready to laugh at and mock them for the pangs and pains which their folly brings on them as he was to tempt and solicit their service. Yet he has no right to their subjection. Though God permits Satan to rule over the children of disobedience, He has given him no grant or warrant which renders it lawful for him to do so. Thus he is a usurper, the declared enemy of God, and though sinners are allowed to yield themselves up to the devil's control, that is far from being by divine approbation. Ephesians 2:2-3 contains the most clear and concise description of this awful subject: "Wherein [a status and state of being dead in trespasses and sins] in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." The world and the prince of the power of the air are definitely linked together, for the dead in sin are said to "walk according to" the one equally as the other—the only difference being that the second statement is amplified by the clauses which follow, where we are shown why they walked thus. The identifying of the world with Satan is easily understood. Three times our Lord called him "the prince of this world," and I John 5:19 declares that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." The world is distinguished from the church of Christ—the children of God. The radical difference between the two opposing companies was intimated at the beginning in the word of Jehovah to the serpent, when He made mention of "thy seed" and "her seed." Those two seeds were referred to by Christ in His parable of the tares, and

designated by Him as "the children of the kingdom" and "the children of the wicked one" (Matt. 13:38). Our Lord also spoke of the "kingdom" of Satan (Matt. 12:26), referring not only to his power and dominion, but to his subjects and officers being an organized company—in opposition to "the kingdom of... [God's] dear Son" (Col. 1:13). Thus "the world" signifies "the world of the ungodly" (II Peter 2:5), not only the sum total of the children of the devil in contradistinction from the children of God, but all the unregenerate, which augments their strength and malignity. When coals, each on fire, are placed together, the fire is increased. In like manner there is an intensification from this union of all parts of this "world." Its "course" connotes, first, its "age" or time, each generation having a more or less distinct character, but essentially the same "evil world" (Gal. 1:4). Second, the word means the mold or manner of the world, its custom or way of life—its "spirit" (I Cor. 2:12) and "fashion" (I Cor. 7:31). The unregenerate walk according to the same maxims and morals; they do as the majority of their fellowmen do, because each has the same depraved nature. "According to the prince of the power of the air." The world is what it is because it is under the dominion of Satan. The mass of the unregenerate are likened to the sea (Isa. 57:20); being bound by a common nature they all move together as the waters of the sea follow the tide. Goodwin said: If the wind comes and blows upon the sea, how it rageth, how strong are the streams then'. There is breath, a spirit, the spirit of the power of the air, namely the Devil sendeth forth an influence whereby, as the wind that bloweth upon the trees, which way it bloweth, so he bloweth and swayeth the hearts of the multitude one way...when all the coals lie together, they make a great fire, but if the bellows be used they make the fire more intense.

The Holy Spirit has here given us a double explanation of why the unregenerate follow the course they take. As each one enters and grows up in the world, being a social creature, he naturally goes with the drove of his fellows; and possessing the same evil lusts he finds their ways agreeable to him. The world, then, is the exemplary cause according to which men shape their lives, but the devil is the impelling cause. Since the fall this malignant spirit has entered into human nature in a manner somewhat analogous to that in which the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers. He has intimate access to our faculties. and though he cannot, like God's Spirit, work at the roots to change and transform their tendencies, yet he can ply them with representations and delusions which effectually incline them to fulfill his behests. He can cheat the understanding with appearances of truth, fascinate the fancy with pretenses of beauty, and deceive the heart with semblances of good. By a whisper, a touch, a secret suggestion, he can give an impulse to our thoughts and turn them into channels which exactly serve his evil designs. Men not only do what he desires, but he has a commanding power over them, as his being termed a prince plainly implies; and therefore they are said to be "taken captive... at his will" (II Tim. 2:26), and when converted they are delivered from his power (Col. 1:13). Yet he does not work immediately in all hearts, as the Holy Spirit does in the regenerate, for he is not omnipresent, but employs a host of demons as his agents. One man can influence another only by external means, but Satan can also affect from within. He is able not only to take thoughts out of men's minds (Luke 8:12), but to place thoughts in them, as we are told he "put into the heart of Judas" to betray Christ (John 13:2); he works indiscernibly as a spirit. As men yield to and comply with the devil's insinuations, he gains increasing control over them, and God permits him to enter and indwell them, as Matthew 12:29 shows. When Satan would incite anyone to some particularly awful sin he takes possession of him. We read that the devil, after Judas had consented to the vile insinuation which he had put into his heart, "entered into" Judas (Luke 22:3), in order to ensure the carrying out of his design by strengthening the traitor to do his will. The word for "entered" is the same as in Mark 5:13 where the unclean spirits entered into the herd of swine, which brought about their destruction. Satan is able to "fill the heart" (Acts 5:3), giving an additional impulse to evil, as a person filled with wine is abnormally fired. But let it be noted that there is no record in Scripture of either the devil or a demon ever taking

possession of a regenerate person. Though the devil works thus in men, and works effectually, yet all their sins are their own. The Spirit is careful to add "worketh in the children of disobedience." Man consents first, then the devil strengthens his resolution. That appears again in Peter's reproaching of Ananias for yielding to temptation: "Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" Satan does no violence either to the liberty or the faculties of men, disturbing neither the spontaneity of the understanding nor the freedom of the will. As the work of God's Spirit in His elect is by no means inconsistent with their full responsibility and their entire moral agency, so the work of the devil in the reprobate makes it nonetheless their work; therefore the dupes of his craft are without excuse for their sins. Unlike the Holy Spirit, the devil has no creative power. He can impart no new nature, but only avail himself of what is already there for him to work on. He avails himself of the constitution of man's nature, especially of his depravity as a fallen being. He gives impetus and direction to man's free but evil tendencies. Rightly did Goodwin point out that "as no man doth sin because God decrees him to sin, and therefore none can excuse himself with that; so no man can excuse himself with this, that Satan worketh in him." Here then is the nature of human depravity as seen from the positive side. The fall has brought man into subjection to the power of death, into hopeless bondage to sin, into complete spiritual blindness. Man has become the bondslave of Satan. In that dreadful state he does not possess a particle of power to deliver himself or even to mitigate his wretchedness. In addition, his heart is filled with enmity against God.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/aw-pink/the-total-depravity-of-man-chapter-7-impact/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net