

The Total Depravity of Man Chapter 8

ENORMITY

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Transcript

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The theology of the last century has failed lamentably at two essential points, namely, its teaching concerning God and its teaching concerning fallen man. As one writer expressed it, "On the one hand, they have not ascended high enough . . . on the other hand, they do not descend low enough." God is infinitely greater and His dominion far more absolute and extensive than most theologians admit, and man has sunk much lower and is far more depraved than they will allow. Consequently man's conduct toward his Maker is vastly more evil than is commonly supposed. Its horrible hideousness cannot really be seen except in the light supplied by Holy Writ. Sin is infinitely more vile in its nature than any of us realize. Men may acknowledge that they sin, but it appears as sin to very, very few. Sin was the original evil. Before it entered the universe there was no evil: "God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Sin is the greatest of all evils. There is nothing in it but evil, nor can it produce anything but evil—now, in the future, forever. As soon as sin was conceived, all other evils followed. The Nature of Sin We may take a survey of everything in and on the earth, and we cannot find anything so vile as sin. The basest and most contemptible thing in this world has some degree of worth in it, as being the workmanship of God. But sin and its foul streams have not the least part of worth in them. Sin is wholly evil, without the least mixture of good—vileness in the abstract. Its heinousness appears in its author: "He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning" (1 John 3:8). Sin is his trade, and he practices it incessantly. Sin's enormity is seen in what it has done to man: it has completely ruined his nature and brought him under the curse of God. Sin is the source of all our miseries; all unrighteousness and wretchedness are its fruits. There is no distress of the mind, no anguish of the heart, no pain of the body, but is due to sin. All the miseries which mankind groans under are to be ascribed to sin. It is the cause of all penalty: "Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto thine heart" (Jer. 4:18). Had there been no sin, there would have been no wars, no national calamities, no prisons, no hospitals, no insane asylums, no cemeteries! Yet who lays these things to heart? Sin assumes many garbs, but when it appears in its nakedness it is seen as a black and misshapen monster. How God Himself views it 'nay be learned from the various similitudes used by the Holy Spirit to set forth its ugliness and loathsomeness. He has

compared it with the greatest deformities and the most filthy and repulsive objects to be met with in this world. Sin is likened to: the scum of a seething pot in which is a detestable carcass (Ezek. 24:10-12) the blood and pollution of a newborn child, before it is washed and clothed (Ezek. 16:4, 6) a dead and rotting body (Rom. 7:24) the noisome stench and poisonous fumes which issue from the mouth of an open sepulcher (Rom. 3:13) the lusts of the devil (John 8:44) putrefying sores (Isa. 1:5-6) a menstruous cloth (Isa. 3:22; Lam. 1:17) a canker, or gangrene (II Tim. 2:17) the dung of filthy creatures (Phil. 3:8) the vomit of a dog and the wallowing of a sow in the stinking mire (II Peter 2:22) Such comparisons show us something of the vileness and horribleness of sin, yet in reality it is beyond all comparison. There is a far greater malignity in sin than is commonly supposed even by the majority of church members. Men regard it as an infirmity, and term it a human frailty or hereditary weakness. But Scripture calls it "an evil thing and bitter" (Jer. 2:19), an abominable thing which God hates (Jer. 44:4). Few people think of it thus; rather the majority regard it as a mere trifle, a matter of so little moment that all they have to do is cry in the hour of death, "Lord, pardon me; Lord, bless me," and all will be eternally well with them. They judge sin by the opinion of the world. But what can a world which "lieth in wickedness" (I John 5:19) know about God's hatred of sin? It does not matter what the world thinks, but it matters a great deal what God says about it. Others measure the guilt of sin by what conscience tells them—or fails to! But conscience needs informing by the Bible. Many uncivilized tribes have put their girl babies and old people to death, and conscience did not chide them. A deadened conscience has accompanied multitudes to hell without any voice of warning. Tens of thousands of religionists see so little filth in sin that they imagine a few tears will wash away its stain. They perceive so little criminality in it that they persuade themselves that a few good works will make full reparation for it. All comparisons fail to set forth the horrible malignity in that abominable thing which God hates. We can say nothing more evil of sin than to term it what it is. "sin, that it might appear sin" (Rom. 7:13). "Who is like unto thee, O LORD?" (Exodus 15:11). When we say of God that He is God we say all that can be said of Him. "Who is a God like unto thee?" (Micah 7:18). We cannot say more good of Him than to call Him God. We cannot say more evil of sin than to say it is sin. When we have called it that, we have said all that can be said of it. When the apostle wanted a descriptive epithet for sin, he invested it with its own name: "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful" (Rom. 7:13). That was the worst he could say of it, the ugliest name he could give it—just as when Hosea denounced the Ephraimites for their idolatry: "So shall Bethel do unto you because of the evil of your evil" (10:15, literal trans.). The prophet could not paint their wickedness any blacker than to double the expression. The hideousness of sin can be set forth no more impressively than in the terms used by the apostle in Romans 7:13. "That sin ... might become exceeding sinful" is a very forcible expression. It reminds us of similar words used by Paul when magnifying that glory which is yet to be revealed in the saints, and with which the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared, namely, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." No viler name can be found for sin than its own. Andrew Fuller stated: If we speak of a treacherous person, we call him a Judas; if of Judas, we call him a devil; but if of Satan, we want a comparison, because we can find none that is worse than himself; we must therefore say, as Christ did, "when he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." It was thus with the apostle when speaking of the evil of his own heart: "that sin by the commandment might become"—what? He wanted a name worse than its own: he could find none; he therefore unites a strong epithet to the thing itself, calling it "exceeding sinful." There are four great evils in sin: the total absence of the moral image of God, the transgression of His just law, obnoxiousness to His holiness, and separation from Him—entailing the presence of positive evil, guilt cannot be measured by any human standard, the most repulsive defilement, and misery inexpressible. Sin contains within it an infinite evil, for it is committed against a Being of infinite glory, unto whom we are under infinite obligations. Its odiousness appears in that fearful description, "filthiness and superfluity of

naughtiness" (James 1:21), which is an allusion to the brook Kidron, into which the garbage of the temple sacrifices and other vile things were cast (II Chron. 29:16). Sin's hatefulness to God is seen in His awful curse upon the workmanship of His own hands, for He would not anathematize man for a trifle. If He does not afflict willingly, then most certainly He would not curse without great provocation. The virulence and vileness of sin can only be gauged at Calvary, where it rose to the terrible commission of Deicide (the killing of a god); at the cross it "abounded" to the greatest possible degree. The demerits of sin are seen in the eternal damnation of sinners in hell, for the indescribable sufferings which divine vengeance will then inflict upon them are sin's rightful wages. Sin is a species of atheism, for it is the virtual repudiation of God. It seeks to discredit Him, to rebel against Him: "Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2). Sin is a malignant spirit of independence. Whether imperceptibly influencing the mind or consciously present, it lies at the root of all evil and depravity. Man desires to be lord of himself; hence his ready reception, at the beginning, of the devil's lie "Ye shall be as gods." Man's credence of that lie was the dissolution of the tie which bound the creature in willing subjection to the Author of his being. Thus sin is really the denial of our creaturehood and, in consequence, a rejection of the rights of the Creator. Its language is "I am. I am my own, and therefore I have the right to live unto myself." Thornwell pointed this out Considered as the renunciation of dependence upon God, it may be called unbelief; as the exaltation of itself to the place of God, it may be called pride; as the transferring to another object the homage due to the Supreme, it may be called idolatry; but in all these aspects the central principle is one and the same.

Effect of Sin in Man's Soul An atheist is not only one who denies the existence of God, but also one who fails to render to God the honor and subjection which are His due. Thus there is a practical atheism as well as a theoretical atheism. The former obtains wherever there is no genuine respect for God's authority and no concern for His glory. There are many who entertain theoretical notions of the divine existence, yet their hearts are devoid of any affection to Him. And that is now the natural condition of all the fallen descendants of Adam. Since "there is none that seeketh after God." (Rom. 3:11), it follows that there is none with any practical sense of His excellence or His claims. The natural man has no desire for communion with God, for he places his happiness in the creature. He prefers everything before Him, and glorifies everything above Him. He loves his own pleasures more than God. His wisdom being "earthly, sensual, devilish" (James 3:15), the celestial and divine are outside his consideration. This appears in man's works, for actions speak louder than words. Our hearts are to be gauged by what we do, not by what we say. Our tongues may be great liars, but our deeds tell the truth, showing what we really are. How little recognized and realized is the fact that all outward impieties are the manifestations of an inward atheism! Yet this is indeed the case. As bodily sores evidence impurity of the blood, so actions demonstrate the corruption of human nature. Sin is often termed ungodliness: "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him" (Jude 14-15). How vain it is to deny atheism in the heart when there is so much of it in the life! Here too the tree is known by its fruits. As an active and operative principle in the soul, sin is the virtual assertion not only of self-sufficiency but also of self-supremacy. Stephen Charnock rightly pointed out, "Those therefore, are more deserving of being termed atheists who acknowledge a God and walk as if there were none, than those (if there can be any such) that deny God, and walk as if there were one." As all virtuous actions spring from a due acknowledgment of God, so all vicious actions rise from a lurking denial of Him. He who makes no conscience of sin has no regard for the honor of God, and consequently none for His being. If "by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6), it clearly follows that in the absence of any awe of Him they rush into evil. Every sin is an invading of the rights of God. When we transgress His laws we repudiate His sovereignty. When we lean

on our own understanding and set up reason as the guide of our actions, we despise His wisdom. When we seek happiness in gratifying our lusts, we slight His excellence and consider His goodness insufficient to satisfy our hearts. When we commit those sins in secret which we would be ashamed to do in public, we virtually deny both His omniscience and omnipresence. When we lean on the arm of flesh or put our trust in some device, we disbelieve His power. Sin is turning the back upon God (Jer. 32:33), kicking against Him (Deut. 32:15), treating Him with the utmost contempt. People do not like to regard themselves as practical atheists. They entertain a much better opinion of themselves than that. They pride themselves on possessing far too much intelligence to harbor so degrading an idea that there is no God. Instead they are persuaded that creation clearly evidences a Creator. But no matter what their intellectual beliefs may be, the fact remains that they are secret atheists. He who disowns the authority of God disowns His divinity. It is the unquestionable prerogative of the Most High to have dominion over His creatures, to make His will known to them, and to demand their subjection. But their breaking of His bands and their casting away of His cords (Ps. 2:3) are a practical rejection of His rule over them. Practical atheism consists of utter contempt of God, conducting ourselves as though there were none infinitely above us who has an absolute right to govern us, to whom we must give a full account of all that we have done and left undone, and who will then pronounce sentence of eternal judgment upon us. The natural man gives himself that homage which is due God alone. When he obtains something which makes him glitter in the eyes of the world, how happy he is, for men "receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only" (John 5:44). They dote on their own accomplishments and acquisitions, but do not delight in the divine perfections. They think highly of themselves, but contemptuously of others. They compare themselves with those lower than themselves, instead of with those above. He who considers himself worthy of his own supreme affection regards himself as being entitled to the supreme regard of his neighbors. Yet it is self-idolatry to magnify ourselves to the virtual forgetfulness of the Creator. When self-love wholly possesses us, we usurp God's prerogative by making self our chief end. This consuming egotism appears again in man's proneness to attribute his achievements to his own virtue, strength and skill, instead of to Him from whom comes every good and perfect gift. This was Nebuchadnezzar's attitude: "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built?" (Dan. 4:30). God punished Herod for not giving Him the glory when instead of rebuking the people he accepted their impious adulation. The same profane spirit is shown by man's envying the talents and prosperity of others. Cain was angry with God, and hated and killed Abel, because his brother's offering was received and his own refused. Since God assigns to each his portion, to look with a grudging eye on that enjoyed by our fellowmen has much of practical atheism in it. It is unwillingness for God to be the Proprietor and Distributor of His favors as He pleases. It is assuming the right to direct the Creator in what He shall bestow on His creatures; denying His sovereignty to give more to one than to another. God disposes of His benefits according to the counsel of His own will, but vain man thinks he could make a better distribution of them. This sin imitates that of Satan who was dissatisfied with the station which the Most High had allotted him (Isa. 14:12-14). It is desiring to take to ourselves that right which the devil lyingly asserted was his—to give the kingdoms of this world to whom he would. Thus would man have the Almighty degrade Himself to the satisfying of his whims rather than His own mind. There is in fallen man a disinclination toward God's rule. Man hates instruction and casts God's words behind his back (Ps. 50:17). God has revealed His great law to man, but it is treated as a strange thing (Hosea 8:12) - What God counts valuable man despises. The very purity of the divine rule makes it obnoxious to an impure heart. Charnock said, "Water and fire may as well kiss each other, and live together without quarreling and hissing, as the holy will of God and the unregenerate heart of a fallen creature." Not only is man's darkened understanding incapable of perceiving the excellence of God's commandments, but there is a disposition in his will which rises up against it. When

any part of God's revealed will is made known to men, they endeavor to banish it from their thoughts. They do not like to retain God in their knowledge (Rom. 1:28), therefore they resist the strivings of the Spirit for obedient compliance (Acts 7:51). How can a fleshly mind relish a spiritual law? Since the palate of man is corrupted, divine things are unsavory to him, and forever remain so until his taste is restored by divine grace. The same atheistic spirit is seen again in men's denials of divine providence. They will not concede that God presides over this scene, directing all its affairs, shaping the circumstances of each of our lives. Rather they attribute their lot to fortune or fate, to good or bad "luck." Even when intellectually convinced to the contrary, they continually quarrel with God's government of this world, and particularly with His dealings with them. Whenever His will crosses theirs, they rebel and rave. If their plans are thwarted, how fretful they are! Men appraise themselves highly, and are angry if God appears not to value them at the same rate—as if their estimation of themselves were more accurate than His. What an evidence of practical atheism this is. Instead of meekly submitting to God's will and adoring His righteousness, men declare Him an unjust Governor, demand that His wisdom be guided by their folly, and malign Him rather than themselves! What proof this is of the fearful enormity of human depravity. We have shown that the heart of the natural man is filled with a secret and unsuspected yet real spirit of atheism. Whatever theological notions he may hold, by his attitude and conduct he repudiates the very being of God. Even that fearful aspect of man's state does not fully express the desperate and deplorable condition to which the fall has reduced him. Not only is he living in this world "without God" (Eph. 2:12)—without due acknowledgment of or practical subjection to Him—but he has a disposition which is directly contrary to Him. With no desire for communion with the true God, man devises false gods and is devoted to them—possessions, pleasures, prestige. Fallen man has cast off all allegiance to God and set himself in open, undisguised opposition to Him. Not only has he no love for God, but his very nature is wholly averse to Him. Sin has worked in all of his being a radical antipathy to God and to His will and ways, for divine things are holy and heavenly and therefore bitter to his corrupt taste. He is alienated from God, inveterately opposed to Him. Sin, as an operative principle in the soul, is virtually the assertion of self-sufficiency and self-supremacy; thus it produces opposition to God. Sin is not only the negation but the contrary of holiness, therefore it breeds antagonism to the holy One. He who affirms and asserts himself must deny and resist God. The divine claims are regarded as those of a rival. God is looked upon as an enemy—the carnal mind is enmity against Him—and enmity is not simply the absence of love, a condition of mere indifference, but a principle of repugnance and virulent resistance. Hence, as John Owen said: Sin's proper formal object is God. It hath, as it were, that command from Satan which the Assyrians had from their king: "fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel," that sin sets itself against. There lies the secret, the formal reason of all opposition to good, even because it relates unto God.... The law of sin makes not opposition to any duty, but to God in every duty.

Thus sin is nothing less than high treason against the absolute sovereignty of God. It is terrible beyond words that any creature of the great God should harbor enmity against Him. He is the sum of all excellence, the source of all good, the spiritual and moral sun of the universe. Yet fallen man is not only His enemy, but his very mind is "enmity against God" (Rom. 8:7). Enemies may be reconciled, but enmity cannot be; the only way to reconcile enemies is to destroy their enmity. In Romans 5:10 the apostle spoke of enemies being reconciled to God by the death of His Son. But when he makes reference to enmity he speaks of Christ's "having abolished in his flesh the enmity" (Eph. 2:15). There is no other way of getting rid of enmity except by its abolition or destruction. Now enmity operates along two lines: aversion and opposition. God is detested and resisted. Sin brings us into God's debt (Matt. 6:12), and this produces aversion of Him. As debtors hate the sight of their creditors and are loath to meet them, so those who are unable to meet the just claims of God fear His confrontation. This was exemplified at the beginning, when

fallen Adam fled as soon as he heard the voice of his Maker. Sin is a disease which has ravaged the whole of man's being, making God obnoxious to him. As an inflamed eye cannot bear the light, the depraved heart of man cannot endure to look upon God; he has a deep-rooted and inveterate detestation of Him and therefore of everything that is of Him. The more spirituality there is in anything, the more it is disliked by the natural man. That which has most of God in it is the most unpalatable to him. God says, "Ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof" (Prov. 1:25). Not simply a part but all of His revealed will was unacceptable to them. This enmity is universal in its manifestations. Not only is the unregenerate heart indisposed to all holy duties, finding them irksome and burdensome, but it hates God's law and rejects His Christ. It abuses His mercies, despises the riches of His goodness and long-suffering. It mocks His messengers, resists His Spirit, flouts His Word, and persecutes those who bear His image. Those at enmity with God serve His adversary the devil, and are heartily in love with that world of which he is prince. Enmity Against God Enmity is a principle which expresses itself by opposition against its object. It contends with what it loathes. As in the regenerate the flesh lusts against the spirit, so in the unregenerate it fights against God. Enmity is the energy behind every sinful act. Though the interests of particular sins may be contrary to one another, they all conspire in a league against God Himself. Back in 1665 an able expositor, W. Jenkyn, expressed it thus: Sins are in conflict with one another: covetousness, and profligacy, covetousness and intemperance agree not. But they are one in combining against the interest of God. In betraying Christ, Judas was actuated by covetousness; the high priest by envy, Pilate by popularity; but all shook hands together in the murdering of Christ. And those varied iniquities were blended together to make up one lump of enmity.

Though in all sins there may not be an express hatred of God, nevertheless in every sin there is an implicit and virtual hatred against Him. So deeply rooted is man's enmity that neither the most tender pleading nor the direst threatening will abate it. God may entreat, but men will not heed; He may chastise, but as soon as He lifts His rod they, like Pharaoh, are as defiant as ever. The message of men's hearts and lives to God is "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways" (Job. 21:14). Man is compared to a wild ass in the wilderness that "snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure" rather than come under the yoke of God (Jer. 2:24). That fact was exemplified all through the long history of Israel, and the conduct of that people was a reflection and manifestation of the nature of all mankind, for "as in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). The exercise of this enmity is continued without interruption from the very beginning of man's days to the end of his unregenerate life (Gen. 6:5). It does not vary at all, being consistent with itself. Sin never calls a truce or lays down the weapons of its rebellion, but persists in its active hostility to God. If divine grace does not work a miracle in subduing such enmity and planting in the heart a contrary principle which opposes it, what must be the doom of such creatures? "Thinkest thou this, O man,... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. 2:3). Vain imagination. Christ will one day say, "Those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me" (Luke 19:27). But far from owning that they hate God, the vast majority of men will not only vehemently deny it, but affirm that they respect and love Him. Yet if their supposed love is analyzed, it is found to cover only their own interests. While a man concludes that God is favorable and lenient with him, he entertains no hard thoughts against Him. So long as he considers God to be prospering him, he carries no grudge against Him. He hates God not as One who confers benefits, but as a Sovereign, Lawgiver, Judge. He will not yield to His government or take His law as the rule of his life; therefore he dreads His tribunal. The only God against whom the natural man is not at enmity is one of his own imagination. The deity whom he professes to worship is not the living God, for He is truth and faithfulness, holiness and justice, as well as being gracious and merciful. The soul of man is a complete stranger to holiness, even when his head is bowed in the house of prayer. But God is not deceived by any

verbal acknowledgments or external homage: "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me" (Matt. 15:8). They believe in a god of their own devising and not the God of Holy Writ. In their awful delusion they imagine they admire God's character while refusing His Son to reign over them. This enmity against God is seen in man's insubordination to the divine law. That is the particular indictment which is made against him in Romans 8, for in proof of the statement that "to be carnally minded is death" the apostle declared, "The carnal mind is enmity against God," and then added by way of demonstration, "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." It is quite evident that the final clause was not brought in by way of excuse (for that would have greatly weakened his argument), but instead to give added force to the awful fact just affirmed. A servant who does not perform his master's order may or may not be guilty of revolt. He cannot be charged with rebellion if the task assigned is altogether beyond his physical powers because of poor eyesight, the loss of a limb or the frailty of old age. But if moral perversity (a spirit of malice and defiance) prevents the discharge of his duty, he is certainly guilty of revolt. We are told that the brothers of Joseph "hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him" (Gen. 37:4). Far from excusing their evil conduct, that only intensified it. They harbored so much ill will against him that they were morally incapable of treating him amicably. Such is the inability of fallen man to be in subjection to God's law. Originally made upright, created in the divine image, given a nature in perfect harmony with God's statutes, endowed with faculties both mental and moral which fully capacitated him to meet their requirements, he is so hostile to his Maker that he is thoroughly averse to His government. Our respect for God is judged by our conformity to His law. As love for God is to be gauged by obedience (John 14:21), so hatred of Him is both measured and manifested by disobedience (Deut. 5:9-10). The natural man knows that God opposes the gratification of his corrupt desires, and he hates God because His law prohibits the indulging of his lusts with that freedom and security which he covets. God commands that which he loathes, and forbids what he longs after. Consequently, man's war against God is a double one: defensive and offensive. Defensively, he slights God's Word, perverts His gifts, resists the overtures of his Spirit (Acts 7:51). Offensively, man employs all his members and faculties as weapons of unrighteousness against God (Rom. 6:13). To slight and resist the divine law is to hold God Himself in contempt, for the law is an expression of His goodness, the transcript of His righteousness, the image of His holiness. Here, then, is the ground of the enmity of the carnal mind: "It is not subject to the law of God." We quote Winslow: The secret is now revealed. God is the moral Governor of the universe. Oh, this is the casus belli between Him and the sinner! This constitutes the real secret of his fall, inveterate hostility to the Divine being. The question at issue is: "Who shall govern—God or the sinner?" The non-subjection of the carnal heart to God's Law—its rebellion against the Divine government—clearly indicates the side of this question which the carnal mind takes. You may, my reader, succeed in reasoning yourself into the belief that you admire, adore, and love God as your Creator and Benefactor, and only feel a repugnance, and manifest an opposition, to Him as a Lawgiver. But this is impossible in fact, however specious it may be in theory.... God's nature and His office, His person and His throne, are one and inseparable. No individual can possibly be a friend to the being of God, who is not equally friendly to His government. Why is the moral Law offensive to the carnal mind? Because of the holiness of its nature and the strictness of its requirements. It not only takes cognizance of external actions, but it touches the very springs of action, the motives that lie concealed in the human heart and regulate the life. It demands supreme affection and universal obedience. To this the carnal mind demurs.

There are multitudes today, even in so-called Christian countries, who are almost totally ignorant of even the terms of God's law—so intense is the darkness that has now settled upon us. The majority of those who have been brought up under acknowledgment of the law, far from valuing such a privilege, despise it.

The language of their hearts against God's faithful servants is that which Israel used of old to His prophet: "As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee" (Jer. 44:16). They "refused to walk in his law" (Ps. 78:10). They had rather be their own rulers than God's subjects; they guide themselves to destruction rather than be directed by Him to blessedness. They crave unbridled liberty and will not tolerate the restraints of a command which checks them. Whatever compliance there may be—for the sake of respectability—to any divine precept which forbids a gross outward sin, the heart still rises up against that part of the law which requires inward purity. The more man's inward corruptions are curbed and condemned, the more he is enraged. Therefore God charges him not only with despising His judgments but with abhorring His statutes (Lev. 26:43). The difference there is between man and God appears in man's unwillingness that any should observe God's law. Not satisfied with being a rebel himself, man would have God left without any loyal subjects in the world; therefore he uses both temptations and threats to induce others to follow his evil example. He paints the pleasures of sin in glowing colors, and sneers at and boycotts those who have any scruples. Ordinarily the workers of iniquity consider those who walk with God to be freaks and fools, and take delight in ridiculing them (I Peter 4:4). It is not that the righteous have wronged the wicked in any way, but that they refuse to have fellowship with them in defying God. This is proof of their awful enmity. Not only are they themselves angry at God's laws, but they cannot bear to see anyone else respecting them. The apostle, after enumerating some of the vilest abominations, brought this indictment against the Gentiles, that they "not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). They delight in accomplishing the downfall of their fellowmen. Another result of man's enmity is his manufacturing of false gods. Though this act is not so noticeably committed by some, yet no one is entirely clear of setting up something in the place of God, for this sin is common to all mankind, as history clearly shows. From the days of Nimrod until the appearing of Christ, the whole Gentile world was abandoned to this impiety, having "changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:23). Even Abraham originally, as well as his parents, was guilty of this sin (Joshua 24:2). From the making of the golden calf at Sinai until their captivity in Babylon, the Israelites repeatedly committed this crime. Today hideous idols are found not only in heathendom but throughout the whole so-called civilized world. Yet the awfulness of idolatry is perceived by very few. Satan cannot invent a more absolute degrading and vilifying of the Most High than calling Him by the names of those senseless objects and repulsive creatures which men erect as representations of Him. Giving an image that homage which belongs to God is making it equal to Him, if not above Him. It portrays the glorious One as though He had no more excellence than a block of stone or a piece of carved wood. Man's enmity against God is a practical repudiation of His holiness, for it cherishes what is directly contrary to it. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13). Since God is infinitely good, He has an infinite detestation of evil. But sin is the very element in which man lives; therefore he hates everything opposed to it. Nothing is more distasteful to him than the company of the godly; and the stricter they are in performing the duties of piety, and the more the image of God is seen shining in and through them, the greater is the longing of the unregenerate to be free from their presence. Man loves sin so much that he seeks to justify himself in the very commission of it. He even goes further and charges it to the holy One. It was thus at the beginning. When arraigned by his Maker, instead of confessing the enormity of his offense, Adam tried to excuse himself by blaming it on God: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Some expositors think that when Cain was charged with the murder of Abel, and answered, "Am I my brother's keeper?" he blatantly put the onus on the Lord. David charged the crime he had contrived to divine providence (II Sam. 11:25). Man still blames God by attributing his sins to his constitution or his circumstances. This fearful hostility is exercised against

the very being of God. That was clearly demonstrated when He became incarnate. The Son of God was not wanted here, but was despised and rejected of men. They provided no better accommodation than a manger for His cradle. Before He reached the age of two such a determined effort was made to kill Him that Joseph and Mary had to take Him to Egypt. Though constantly going about doing good, both to the souls and bodies of men, He had to declare, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). They called Him the vilest names they could think of: a glutton and drunkard, a Samaritan, a devil. Again and again they took up stones to throw at Him. His miracles of mercy did not lessen their enmity: "This is the heir; come, let us kill him" (Matt. 21:38); and no ordinary death would satisfy them. After heaping the worst possible indignities on His sacred person and inflicting the most barbarous suffering, they nailed Him to a convict's gibbet, then mocked and reviled Him while He was fastened hand and foot to the cross. As the Lord Jesus declared, "He that hateth me hateth my Father also" (John 15:23). Now such an attitude against God inevitably falls back on ourselves. Alienated from the Source of all real good and purity, what can the consequence be but to be polluted in every part of our beings—a mass of putrefaction? Sin has indeed worked havoc in the human constitution. Man's very nature is degraded. No creature is so debased as man, for he alone has erased the image of God from his soul. Man, once the glory of creation, has become the vilest of all creatures. He who was given dominion over the beasts has sunk lower, for they are not guilty of mad and wicked intemperance, they are not without natural affection toward their offspring (as so many of the human species are), nor do they commit suicide. Man's apostasy from his Maker could not result in anything less than the complete mutilation of his soul, depriving it of that perfect harmony and balance of its faculties with which it was originally endowed, robbing them of their primitive excellence and beauty. The whole of our inner man has been attacked by a loathsome disease, so that there is now no soundness in it. What villainy is in fallen man! No wonder the Scriptures ask, "Who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). None but the very One against whom it lifts its vile head. What an awful spectacle, to witness the finite in deadly opposition to the Infinite! The creature and the Creator are at direct odds, for while a serpentine nature and a devilish disposition remain unsubdued within fallen man, he will no more seek to glorify the Lord than will Satan himself. The unregenerate man detests Him who is light and love. The ox knows its owner, and the ass his master's crib, but the one who has been endowed with rationality and immortality does not recognize the hand that daily ministers in mercy throughout his life. What long-suffering God shows to those who treat Him so basely! What abundant cause the Christian has to abhor himself and hang his head in shame as he contemplates the awfulness of all the sin that still indwells him!

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