

Human Depravity

by Edward Payson

The sermon highlights mankind's disregard for God's rights and the consequences of forsaking God, emphasizing the importance of gratitude and affection towards God.

Scripture: Exodus 20:3, Psalm 14:1, Malachi 3:8, Matthew 22:37, John 5:39, James 4:4

Topics: "Human Nature", "Idolatry"

Description

Edward Payson preaches about mankind's tendency to disregard God's rights and promises, comparing it to how they fulfill promises made to each other but violate promises made to God. He highlights the ingratitude towards God, the tendency to blame Him for their faults, and the act of robbing God of their affections. Payson also emphasizes how the world becomes an idol to people, consuming their thoughts and actions while neglecting the Creator. He concludes by pointing out that how we treat the Bible reflects our feelings and dispositions towards God.

Transcript

Mankind seem to consider God as a sort of outlaw, who has no rights; or, at least, as one whose rights may be disregarded and trampled on at pleasure. They allow that promises made to each other ought to be fulfilled; but they violate, without scruple, those promises which they often make to God, in an hour of seriousness, sickness, or affliction. They allow that earthly rulers ought to be obeyed, but they seem to think that no obedience is due to the Sovereign Ruler of the universe.

They allow that children ought to love, honor, and submit to their parents; but they do not appear to think that either love, honor, or submission, should be paid to our Father in heaven. They allow that gratitude is due to human benefactors, and that to requite their favors with ingratitude, is a proof of abominable wickedness; but they practically deny that any grateful return should be made to our heavenly Benefactor for his innumerable benefits, and seem to consider the blackest ingratitude towards him as scarcely a sin.

When a son forsakes his father's house; when he refuses to comply with his entreaties to return; when he chooses to endure all the evils of poverty rather than return, --we are ready to suspect that his father must be a very disagreeable, unlovely, or cruel character, since his own children cannot live with him. At least, we shall think this unless we have a very bad opinion of the son. We must condemn one or the other. So, when God's own creatures, whom he has nourished and brought up as children, forsake him, and refuse to return or be reconciled, it gives other beings cause to suspect that he must be a very cruel, unlovely being; and they must either conclude that he is so, or form a very bad opinion of us.

Now, sinners will not allow that the fault is theirs; of course they throw all the blame upon their Creator, and represent him as such an unkind, cruel Parent, that his children cannot live with or please him. It is true, God has power to vindicate his own character, and to show the universe that the fault is wholly ours. But this is no thanks to us. The tendency of our conduct is still the same; it still tends to load his character with the blackest infamy and disgrace. This is all the return we make him for giving us existence.

Thus do ye requite the Lord, O foolish people, and unwise. Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. It is evident that you withhold your hearts from God; or, in other words, rob him of your affections, the very thing which he principally desires. And is this a small offence? Should a person rob you of the affection and esteem of the partner of your bosom, of your children, or your friends, would you not think it a great injury? Would it not in many instances be worse than robbing you of your property?

And is it, then, a trifling offence for intelligent creatures to rob their Creator, Father and benefactor, of that supreme place in their affections to which he has a most perfect right, and which he prizes above every thing they possess? The world is, in some form or other, the great Diana, the grand idol of all its inhabitants, so long as they continue in their natural sinful state. They bow down to it; they worship it; they spend and are spent for it; they educate their children in its service; their hearts, their minds, their memories, their imaginations, are full of it; their tongues speak of it; their hands grasp it; their feet pursue it.

In a word, it is all in all to them, while they give scarcely a word, a look, or a thought to him who made and preserves them; and who is really all in all. Thus men rob God of their bodies and spirits, which are his, and practically say, We are our own; who is Lord over us? From the manner in which we habitually treat the Bible, we may learn what are our feelings and dispositions towards God; for as we treat the word of God, so should we treat God himself, were he to come and reside among us, in a human form, as he once dwelt on earth in the form of his Son.

The contents of Scripture are a perfect transcript of the divine mind. If, then, God should come to dwell among us, he would teach the same things that the Scriptures teach, and pronounce upon us the same sentence which they pronounce. We should therefore, feel towards him as we now feel towards them. If we reverence, and love, and obey the Scriptures, then we should reverence, love and obey God. But if we dislike or disbelieve the Scriptures, if we seldom study them, or read them only with indifference and neglect, we should treat God in the same manner. Never would he be a welcome guest in a family where his word is neglected.

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