

Questions on Inability

by John Murray

The sermon discusses the importance of conviction in relation to repentance, the free offer of the gospel, and the relationship between death and sin.

Duration: 51:26

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Mark 10:14, Romans 5:8, Romans 8:9, Ephesians 2:1, Ephesians 3:8, 1 Timothy 2:5

Topics: "Inability"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the fear that comes with proclaiming the word of God. He emphasizes that the free offer of the gospel is centered around Christ and his finished work. The preacher also mentions the role of the Holy Spirit in opening the hearts of individuals to receive and embrace the love of Christ. He highlights the importance of preaching about the heinousness, guiltiness, misery, and consequences of sin. Additionally, there is a question raised about the compatibility of certain doctrines with the free offering of grace in the gospel, to which the preacher explains that they are based on the fact of man's total inability.

Transcript

Let us pray. O Lord, our God, we acknowledge our wrong and impotence, and our complete destitution. And we implore the supplication of Christ Jesus.

Thy great name. If Jesus came into the world, His grace is sufficient for us, in effort and weakness. And all for the glory of Thy name through Him.

As the one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus. Amen. Let's begin.

Neil's asking a question of the Closed Studio yesterday. No, he's not here today. Well, I guess.

Oh, he went to New York. Hello. Basically, true, if you mean it in the sense it's absolute happiness, because repentance is basically turning from the sin.

Conviction, type of conviction. We may have, but a conviction that is consonant with the evangelical character of repentance. And if he is to have that conviction, a conviction consonant with the nature of sin, and with the consequences thereof, but we may never dogmatize the depth of that conviction.

See, faith itself may be as a grain of mustard seed. And in some, the conviction isn't what you might call a very overpowering conviction. It's just called a very germ of conviction.

But sufficiently, see, a true conviction. And therefore, consonant with the nature of evangelism. And we must always beware of laying down standards as to the degree of conviction, or as to the degree of faith.

In some cases, these things are very, very germinal. Very germinal indeed. But nevertheless, they are due to the work of the Spirit of God.

They supply, these convictions are germinal, but they supply sufficient conviction to make faith meaningful. And faith comes, which is basically, or essentially, or germinally, a true conviction. It will be done.

Some people, when they are converted, have what you might call a very inadequate, if I may use the word in the sense of lack of thoroughness, a very inadequate kind of being thorough, well-developed, realization of the heinousness. You find that to be the very case in religious and Christian experience. Very often you find men who have begun, as it were, their Christian course with what you might call a rather superficial conviction, and later on have a very, very marked sense of the heinousness.

And sometimes what has begun with a very, very intense conviction may not later on be characterized by the same degree of conviction respecting the heinousness and the evil of sin as the person who began on a very different level. So you have to make allowance for all sorts of varieties of Christian experience. You have to make a prescribe the minimum or the maximum of conviction in these matters.

There was a man, for example, in my home parish in Scotland. A way back he died in 1865, I believe. A very old man at the age of 90.

So I never saw him. And he was a very godly man. Yes, very, very godly.

A very able man also. He couldn't read one word. He was a native genius in that respect.

Well, he was a man of 30 before he had been awakened. But having been awakened, he was deeply convicted for a whole year and a half. Nervous, overwhelmed.

And it was a year and a half before he was relieved by the light of the gospel. What he never had during that whole year and a half was when he would go out in the early morning and hear the birds singing himself. Well, you see, there is an instance.

The most striking instance I ever heard of. A long period of silence. And hence conviction, a realization.

Of course, he had relief by the light of the gospel later on and became a very eminent saint. Now, I'm not saying that in his case at all the conviction of sin later on in his regenerate state was not also very acute. I presume it would have been.

But in any case, what I am saying is that you may never gauge the subsequent portion of a believer's life by the beginnings. Have I answered your questions? Very well. But it's to be around with us.

That's to be maximum. We're not going to fall down. Not the heinousness and guilt and evil consequence of sin.

But we have to make allowance for the fact that our proclamation of the heinousness, the guilt and the evil of sin may be reflected in the consciousness of a truly penitent person only to a very limited extent. But it isn't that limited extent that is to be the gauge of our preaching. But we have to preach the standard that God has given us.

And our preaching must always be maximum so that the conviction of a true believer may be what is always reflected in the heinousness of sin with respect to its guilt and misery. Well, Mr. Narayan, sir, no? Yes, sir. A free offer of the gospel.

Well, the reason for my saying that is a free offer of the gospel. This is the doctrine of scripture. The free offer of grace in the gospel is predicated on it.

And, of course, it has no other presupposition than that of the gospel. The very doctrine of grace has no other presupposition than the complete bankruptcy of man. That is the biblical doctrine of grace.

It is the biblical doctrine. There is no point at which this offer of grace is put. Now, what is offered in the gospel, the body of Christ has to be offered.

The body of Christ has to be offered. Well, any other question? You said, with regard to ritual, again because of voluntary nature of the person, of the imputation of the gift. Oh, yes.

The same holds true for the man that developed the point. You see, I was making the point, as you put it, late, outside of a few nights on the Hebrews, that I would be involved in original sin, involved in original sin, in the prayer, become depraved. And, of course, what you say is perfectly correct.

The gift, that point, does intersect with boldness. Anything else? All that's an entirely relevant question. Very relevant.

Now, of course, I'll be dealing with that later on, next year. Nevertheless, I should answer that question. The gospel, in all its fullness and freeness, to man's death and trespass.

And when I'm faced with the question, what's the sense of it? I may ask that question. Well, the answer to that is, just on hand, let me see, that I know that that is just by that very fool-free proclamation, that he is powerfully free, to work efficaciously in the hearts of men. Of course, that is demonstrated mainly on it, that he has some degree of conviction, which makes the gospel meaningful.

Now, here he comes to a particular church service, or whatever it may be, an evangelistic service, and Christ is presented to him in all his fullness and glory and freeness. Only the Holy Spirit enables him thus to respond. But I know that it is just in connection with that fool-free proclamation and overture.

And that's what gives me a cover. Every person in the audience, but I never know, I never know whether that fool and free proclamation of the gospel perfectly dovetails into the need of a particular person. I mean the conscious need of a particular person, because that person is at the point of desperation.

He's in that desperation. He's open and he's conscious. But here there comes the proclamation, and the free offer of the gospel is just to this effect, that Christ, in all the glory of his person, in all the perfection of his finished work, in all the efficacy of his heavenly ministry, is placed in the very lap of the sinner's tent.

But I never know the particular individual into whose lap Christ is placed, so that he will... Let me answer your question. How's death? Death in connection with this... That Christ is placed... Let me answer your

question. How's death? What is the exact nature of that word death? Oh well, this word death is that the person who serves is totally unable to stand, is totally unable to live to the glory of God in a way that is well pleasing to him, is totally unable to obey the commandments of God.

That is what that that person does not live to God. He does not live in the world of God's saving grace. He lives in an entirely different world.

But your question is a very relevant question, but again, Mr. Charles, you're anticipating something that may develop a very considerable length in senior years in connection with the subject of faith. So, well, let's have a look at the book on pre-estimation. If you ask this question, original sin and the death of infants, he seems to conclude that all people, all children who die before they reach an age of accountability are in God's elect, and therefore no one really goes to hell because of living sin or... Well, you see, that has been a position held by a... Well, I think so.

Well, no. But Charles Horace took the position that all infants dying in infancy were elect. Or maybe he wanted to develop that still further, even more emphatically than Charles Horace did.

And that has been more or less the case. And Liz Hale, I've walked in, who has an article on the subject, The Development and Production of Infants. It's the history of thought in the reformed church of infection.

And he shows historical point of view, distinct development, and then reformed theology in the direction of that age that all infants died in infancy. Well, my position on that is that I cannot say if it is God's good pleasure to save all infants dying in infancy, but I don't think it is. And don't think.

I'd like to think that dying in infancy... We have no right to say, however, well, we have no right to say either that infants dying, that some infants dying in infancy are not non-committed. We don't know. When we leave unrevealed things to God, that adults... What proof have you? Oh, well... I really would have to look that up.

There is a walking, of course, in a great deal of that. Matthew 18, 14, 15. Some of the little children come up to me and say, such is the kingdom of God, that the kingdom of God includes all infants dying in infancy, and that it's for that reason, you see, characterized by such is the kingdom of God, and that some would appeal to you, Romans 5, 18.

Romans 5, 18. There's a justification, you see, of emanating from the relationship of Christ to mankind, or deliverance from the committed by the person concerned. But beyond that, I can't remember in that period of time, because I would have to go back, and I haven't read these men for quite a long time, and I don't remember, I just can't remember what the text was.

But I know that Matthew 19, 15, Matthew 19 and the parable of Mark, Luke, are one of the main results of this doctrine. But I can't remember of any evidence they appease in addition. Yes.

Are you going to deal with this concept of age of accountability under post-periodology? When the age of accountability starts, you mean? Well, with the subject in general. Are you going to include this in any of your lectures? The age of accountability. Well, I don't know.

I can't remember. Not in this course. Well, I am nine later next year.

You see, it would come in in connection with baptism. It would come in in connection with baptism, or definitely later. But I no longer lecture on that, the book on baptism, because I have to be in time.

But it does come in there, really. Very relevant. I think you should be lecturing on it.

Does the Westman compare to the elect children of Satan, who they had in grandeur, children of believers? Oh, you can't tell. You can't tell what they had in mind. That is denoted.

They were just non-believers. Of course, they certainly, the Westminster divine, in accordance with common reform beliefs, did hold that the infant seed of believing parents who die in infancy would be saved, at least a great many of them, through the doctrines, the covenants, or more or less a common prophecy of reform thinking. And it's very explicitly stated in Calvin that the infant seed of believing parents die in infancy.

But of course, if you ask my question on that again, I would have to dig that up. And it would be what is implied in believing parents. Partly, I think, just because the parents happen to be professing communicant members of the church, that their children are automatic.

So I would have to agree with this. But that, again, comes next year, in fact. Any more questions? So, in Romans 5.18, the comparison between Adam and between the sin of one man and the righteousness of another man, with regard to sin, which we can accept.

So here it says, Through one righteous, and they, through the righteousness of one, are righteous unto all the man. And it seems to me, the contrast between verse 18, and unto the righteousness of another, where, also, in verse 12, it happens to be not finished. So, in all the indications of the verse 12, it is presently finished, without also being unto all man.

But, if you finish, if you supply the contrast of verse 12 in terms of verse 12, which, of course, is powerful, but, it would read, So, by one man's righteousness entered into the world, and life by righteousness, and so life passed unto all men in that all were consecrated. You would have the same thing that you would have in verse 18. Well, that's the whole question.

And you are familiar with the Arminian, Arminian exegesis of Romans 5.18, that the original thing, the original thing of all mankind is a universal denotation to the all-inclusive positive that belongs to the prophet. And, it might seem that if you have to give as broad a denotation to the positive, but that would therefore be understood in the vision to all men of original thing of the guilt of having the first thing taken away of the depravity which would prompt having the first thing. So that all men are beneficially part of the baptism of eternal life.

You have to give to the universalistic term in the apotheosis restrictive denotation because Paul is not dealing simply with the remission of the guilt of having the first thing in this passage. He's dealing with an all-inclusive justification that is unto eternal life. That's the justification he's dealing with in this epistle.

Not simply the justification from the guilt of having the first thing, but all-inclusive justification. And you cannot give it a more limited connotation in this passage in Romans 5, 18. No, you cannot.

Now it's characteristic of Paul to use universalistic expressions when he does not use them in the sense of the distributive universalism. You go over to 1 Corinthians 15, 22. I deny them all died, even falling Christ shall all be made alive.

Now it's quite apparent something demonstrated by Jesus of that passage. Paul is dealing with the resurrection of life. Not with the resurrection of all men in this humanity.

But with the resurrection of believers. With reference to them, he says, in Christ all shall be made alive. As in Adam all died, even falling Christ shall all be made alive.

Now the expression is distributive universal is distributive universal in the structure as in Adam all died. We know that. Not simply because Paul states it in that passage, but from other considerations.

So there you have what is distributively universal in the process. Distributively universal in the process but is nevertheless restricted in the apotheosis. Though in Mormon 5 he goes on to conclude that the process is distributively universal.

But we are up again in superb exegetical difficulties if we give to the apotheosis the same universally distributive denotation. Because Paul is dealing with absolute time, infinity, justification which has its issue in eternal life. And you can't believe that that applies to all distributively unless you believe in the final eternity.

So this is according to Paul's own teaching which is very explicit in several passages. According to Paul's own teaching there is no such thing as the universal justification of all mankind. Some will be finally lost.

Therefore it is in Paul's doctrine that all will be finally saved. Therefore we have to suppose that it is Paul's intent in Mormon 5 18b to refer to the justification of all men distributively. But Paul is dealing with this modus operandi and not at all with the question of the denotation.

Modus operandi is the point of comparison. As in Adam all die even so in Christ all shall die. That's why I say all who are in Adam die.

They have to apply the same limitations to Mormon 5 18b on these. Well, that's my answer to that. So there are a few minutes left.

If you want to leave some good questions, I admit to not list their names yet. I'm going to leave a few out of time for folks who are interested. Oh, I left about two years ago.

About two years ago I looked at it. I was quite satisfied with it. I was aware of it at that time.

You know, when you burn something, you sometimes read books and have them all marked up so that I read them very carefully and a few years later I completely forgot that I ever read them. I'm amazed when I go back and find them all marked up with my own pencil. So I must have read them.

I know my hand. So it's quite a while since I looked into Packard's book, but when I did read the book, I was quite satisfied. Dr. Packard is, I believe, a fellow in high school.

He has very excellent literary quality. I suppose you have read the book, Mr. Metzger. Yes.

Have you been satisfied with it? I was wondering about the question of if you've ever been afraid. I've never heard you in the way you formulated it. I'm eminently proud.

I'll be dealing with that later. But that's eminently correct. I believe according to the doctrines of Scripture you just can't say properly to anyone a particular individual who is still, of course, unconverted.

Can I die for you? No, I don't want you in my world. The Matter of Modern Divinity which exercised a great influence in the Scottish disposal by Thomas Boston. The Matter of Modern Divinity was a book published in 1645.

So the title is obsolete. It was not obsolete at that time. And that was a Calvinistic document which exercised a tremendous influence, especially in Scotland, in the matter of preaching the Gospel, pre-opera of the Gospel.

But they had a formula which they used and that is they wouldn't say to anyone, Christ died for you. But you could say to all men, Christ is dead for you. But I'm not acceding to that.

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