

WHAT IS MAN?
or, THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

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For the past six Sundays we have been contemplating what we could call the indescribable glory of our God. We have been considering together God's wonderful grace, His sovereign power, His absolute righteousness, His amazing love, and His unerring wisdom. Then last Lord's day we were noticing from the Scriptures that God is now what He always has been, and that He will never change throughout all eternity to come. This means that He is immutable; He is unchanging. All that I have said, and all that I could ever say, is like a drop in a bucket as compared with the vast sea of glorious truth concerning the infinite majesty of our God. These are truths that can never be exhausted. And regardless of how many times we go to the Word of God we can learn more about His grace, more about His power, more about His love, more about all of these glorious attributes.

This morning I want to go to the other end of the spectrum and talk about man. Perhaps it would help us to trace what the Word of God teaches about man through four main phases that are given to us in the Scriptures. These have been described by many people, but one of the Puritans, born in Scotland in the year 1676, by the name of Thomas Boston, has written a book called, Human Nature In Its Fourfold State. If you are looking for something that will be a rich blessing to you, I would certainly advise you to get that book and read it along with your Bible. Thomas Boston said that we must distinguish when we read in the Scriptures between what man was at creation, then what he became as a result of Adam's sin, and, thirdly, what man becomes when he is saved, and then, finally, what redeemed man will be throughout eternity. Thomas Boston called these four states: the state of innocence; the state of nature; the state of grace; and finally, the eternal state. He said that in the first, the state of innocence, we have primitive integrity; in the second, the state of nature, we have entire depravity; in the third, the state of grace, recovery is begun; and in the fourth, depending upon our relationship to Jesus Christ, those who know Him will experience consummate happiness, and those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour will experience consummate misery for all eternity.

Now for the past six weeks I have been saying over and over again (and I hope that this has been written on your hearts permanently) that we can never understand the Biblical doctrine of salvation, the doctrines of grace, as they are often referred to, until we understand something about God. The people who just get into the

doctrine of salvation without taking any time to consider Who God is or what God is like are really

not in a position to understand that salvation must be what it is. They do not realize that man, with all of his good intentions and good efforts, can never bring himself up to a place where he would be acceptable to God. So that is the reason we have been thinking together in these Sunday morning services about the attributes of God. But today, as I have said, I want to consider another very essential doctrine. We need to understand at least something about what the Bible teaches about God, but we need also to know what the Word of God has to say about man if we are to understand the nature of salvation. In our churches today we often hear the opposite from what is taught in Scripture about man. We are told how wonderful man is, what glorious potential he has, how he may have been hurt by sin, but that there is still plenty of good left in him. And you do not have to go to modernistic churches to hear this. You find this teaching in many of our evangelical churches. We are taught to love ourselves, to begin to realize how much we can do if we will only realize how much we have in us. Now this is not the wisdom of God. This is not the Word of God. This is the wisdom of man. This is not the truth of God's Word. This humanistic psychology which has unfortunately made its way into the teachings of the church of Jesus Christ today.

In the hope of setting the record straight concerning what the Scriptures teach about man, this morning I want to look briefly into the first two states of man. And I will use the expressions that Thomas Boston used so long ago: the state of innocence, what man was at creation; and the state of nature, what man has become as a result of Adam's sin. And I do this so that we will be better prepared to understand the other doctrines of grace which, the Lord willing, are going to follow now in the next four Sundays. If we know what God is like and we know what man is like, then we will see why it was necessary, not only for God to choose men for salvation, why Christ had to die, but also why it is necessary for God to move upon the hearts of sinners, constraining them to come to Him, and why it is necessary for the Lord not only to save us, but to keep us saved. All of this is taught in the Word of God.

So I raise the question this morning, What is man? I am not concerned about how man would describe himself, but about how this truth is taught in the Word of God.

What, first of all, was his original state?

I. MAN, CREATED BY GOD

Now the answer to this is very simple. It is elementary, I am sure, for most of you who are listening to my voice. But sometimes we have to go back to the elementary things in order to understand the more profound teachings of the Word. So my first point is that man was created by God. Now all of you are well aware of that. Man did not evolve. We reject the teaching of evolution. Man was created by God, created as the climax of all earthly creation. Genesis chapter 1 teaches us this. Let me read what God said and did on the sixth day of creation, words which I am sure are very familiar to you. Genesis 1:26 and 27:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female

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created he them.

Now man was not only created, but he alone, in all of God's creation, was made in the image and likeness of God. This expression is not used for any other creature. Man was created "in the image and likeness of God." But if I understand Psalm 8, where David raises the question, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?", He was not contemplating man after the fall, but he was

contemplating man as he was originally created. And so he said, "What is man, that thou are mindful of him?" If you consider man as he was, created in the image and likeness of God, and then begin to think of the infinite glory of God Himself, you must still raise the question, "What is man that God is mindful of him?"

As a creature of God, man was created as being responsible to God, responsible to obey Him, responsible to do His will, responsible to glorify Him. Man was created, as the Bible clearly shows, without sin. As he was at creation, he never would have died. As perfect as all creation was, nothing could compare with man as he was in the beginning. Now he was created with the same kind of human body that you and I have: he had a head, he had two arms, he had two legs, he had two eyes, two ears, a nose, and a mouth. But, as to his inward being, he was made in the likeness of God--with the power to think, the power to act, the power to show emotion. And outwardly the glory of God was upon him so that it was not necessary for him in the beginning even to be clothed. If spiritually blinded men can go into ecstasy about what man is today, they would be beside themselves if they knew what man used to be. But unfortunately man did not remain as he was created. Adam sinned and he brought sin into every human heart. Whether we like it or not the Bible tells us this, speaking of Adam's disobedience to God in the garden of Eden. And we have these familiar words in Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." The Greek says, "For that all sinned"--sinned in Adam. The sinful nature that you and I have is traceable to Adam and to his disobedience. So that every human being has suffered the consequences of Adam's disobedience to God.

II. MAN'S FALLEN STATE

God has given us in His Word, not only the information as to where we came from and what man was like after creation, but His Word also tells us what man became as a result of Adam's original sin. And so, secondly, I want to look this morning with you at man's fallen state: created innocent, created without sin, created in the image and likeness of God. But, as a result of Adam's disobedience to God, sin has fallen upon the entire human family.

But what can we say about his fallen state? Man today is still physically what he was at creation. We certainly do not have the strength and the vitality that Adam had at creation, and we do not have his glory. But our bodies are like Adam's body. The marks of sin and death are upon us now, but our bodies are like the body which Adam had--with the exception of the glory. There are many tragic, humanly hopeless, differences between man as he is now in his fallen state as compared with what he was at creation. And these are spoken of in the Word of God. Now we need to understand these in order to see what Martin Lloyd-Jones called the plight of man, his desperate condition, his hopeless state. And while this again is an inexhaustible subject, I want to point out to you from the Word of God some of the things that are clearly taught in Scripture, so that we will be in a better

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position to understand why salvation has to be the way it is and why salvation has to be what it is.

First of all, and I have already indicated this, man became a sinner. Now I want to make it clear that God did not create man as a sinner. God is not responsible in any way for our sin. Man is totally responsible. And, as a sinner, man is under the awful, eternal judgment of God. As an evidence of man's sinful state, we all know that man is inclined to do his own will and that he is not inclined at all to do the will of God. Because of man's sin, he dies physically. He is also dead spiritually. He is destined for eternal death. Man may be capable of doing many things that are good in the eyes of other men. Nobody denies this. But Jeremiah said long ago, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). Isaiah said, previously, in Isaiah 64:6, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." Now that's the picture

of the human heart.

Our text, which was read to us, in Romans chapter 3 verse 10 says, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one." Thomas Boston made this comment in one of his writings. He said,

There is no ground for parents to be lifted up on account of children, however numerous and fair. For though they may have fair faces, they have foul and deformed souls by nature, and natural beauty is far outbalanced by spiritual ugliness. Parents have much need to carry them by faith and prayer to the fountain of Christ's blood to get them washed and purified from their spiritual uncleanness (The Beauties of Boston, p. 443).

So as sinners, we are thoroughly corrupt in the sight of God. Every man, every woman--every person born (with the exception of our Lord Jesus Christ) is capable of the grossest sins. And it is only because of the restraining power of our sovereign God that the world has not been plunged into the full consequences of man's thoroughly depraved nature. If there are sins that you have never committed, then you are to give God the glory. He is the only One Who can keep us from doing all of these dreadful things which we are capable of doing. Listen again to the text that was read to us:

They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes

(Rom. 3:12-18). This is God's portrait of the human heart. Isaiah the prophet also said in the first part of Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." So because of sin, man is proud, self-sufficient, full of self-love, corrupt, deceived. He is utterly unfit to do anything that is pleasing to God. Genesis chapter 6, verse 5, says that "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination (every reasoning) of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." He said that before the flood, and God said essentially the same thing after the flood in Genesis chapter 8, verse 21.

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Now because of man's sin and his corruption, in the second place, man is spiritually dead. Now this means that man without Christ is completely without divine life, which means that man has neither the inclination nor the capacity to please God. He is God-less--"having no hope," as Paul said in Ephesians 2:12, "and without God in this world."

Many of our great hymns have been written by a man by the name of Augustus Toplady, who only lived to be 38 years of age. And he has written many wonderful things concerning the Scriptures. One comment that he made regarding the deadness, the spiritual deadness, of the human heart was this: "Whilst thou art unconverted, thy body is but the living coffin of a dead soul (Contemplations, p. 96). Again our text says in Romans 3:11, "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." This is evidence of spiritual death. Sin has even rendered it impossible for man to repent, and impossible for him to believe. He is dead in trespasses and sins. His condition is utterly hopeless.

Third, man is not only a sinner, and spiritually dead, but he is spiritually blinded. This means that he is both ignorant of spiritual truth, and that he is incapable of learning the truth of God. This is why the Bible is not popular among non-Christians. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 2:14, "But 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." Man, if left to himself, is always going to reject the Word of God. He will not accept this picture of the human heart which is given to us

in the Bible. He is hardened by sin into believing lies about himself. Romans 3:11 says that "there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." And to this Paul added in 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."

How, then, is it going to be possible for us to get the light into the darkened hearts of unregenerate people? How did the light ever get to us? Well, the answer is to be found in the ministry of the Word of God. One reason I am reading so many Scriptures this morning is because it is the Word of God that God is going to use to open the hearts of people. The Psalmist said in Psalm 119:130, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." So it is only by the preaching of the Word of God that the light of the knowledge of God is going to be brought to the hearts of men. And it is God Who determines where that light shall shine forth. Again, going back to that chapter that I have spoken about so many times, Isaiah 55, where God said, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." There is a parallel between salvation and what God did at creation when God simply spoke and the world was brought into being. Paul told us in 2 Corinthians 4:6 that "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." That is the reason that we speak of salvation as a new creation--because, just as God spoke and brought the original creation into existence, so it is He Who speaks the Word and makes us new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is not anything that you and I do for ourselves.

But then, fourthly, notice also that man by nature is an enemy of God. He is not Page 6
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only a sinner, dead, blinded spiritually, hardened, ignorant, but he is by nature an enemy of God. But you might say, "Well, I know a lot of people who are interested in God--people who are involved in various religions throughout the world. There seems to be a religious bent to man's nature. How can you say that he is an enemy of God?" Well, I am talking about the God Who is revealed in Scripture. You know, people have in their minds an idea of what they would like for God to be, or what they think God may be, but when you confront them with the God Who is revealed in Scripture, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God Whom the Lord Jesus Christ came to reveal, this is the God they do not want! Man is not indifferent to God; man manifests hostility toward God. Romans 5:10 speaks of our being the enemies of God. Romans 8:7 says that the carnal mind, the mind of man as he is by nature, is at enmity against God, that it "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Now at times it may seem that man in his despair is interested in God, but man always wants peace on his own terms, not on God's terms. There is enmity, there is rebellion in the human heart against God. And I hope that you see, as we go through these various points, that the case against man becomes darker and darker. And the possibility that man would ever do anything, or could do anything, about his own salvation is non-existent.

Finally, I want to mention the fact that man is a slave and in total bondage. He is in total bondage to his sin. He is in total bondage to Satan. He is in total bondage to his old, unredeemed, unregenerate nature. Man is not free. He is a slave. And this needs to be sounded from the housetops, doesn't it? It is true that man does what he wants to do, that man makes decisions, and that man exercises his will, but we are talking about man's relationship to God. And yet even in all those other areas, man is in bondage to his nature. He has a will, there is no doubt about that, but his will is not free. His will is enslaved to sin, and enslaved to Satan himself. Have you ever wondered why it is that people go on doing things that they know are wrong, and oftentimes things that they hate, things that they know are harmful to them, yet they persist in doing them? Why is this? Why is it that they continue? Why is it that they persist in doing that which is harmful to themselves? The reason that they do not change is because they cannot change; they are in bondage

to their sins. No man can set himself free from sin. The Lord Jesus made this very, very clear in John 8:34 when He said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the bondservant of sin." You see, the person who goes on living in sin does so because he cannot do anything about it. He is a slave to his sin. He is a bondservant, under the dominion of sin, unable to set himself free.

Look at the first three verses in Ephesians chapter 2 and notice how the bondage of man is indicated there as Paul described for the Ephesian believers what they used to be, and what every person is without the Lord Jesus Christ:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air (who is Satan), the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

So if you want to see a picture of absolute hopelessness, here it is. This is the way you lived, Paul was saying. You were under bondage to the prince of the power of the air, you were under bondage to the world, you were under bondage to Doctrines of Grace -- #7

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your old sinful nature. Proverbs 5:22 says this of man: "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." You see, this is not something that is just taught in the New Testament; this is all through the Word of God. People are held in bondage to their sins. When Peter in Acts 8:23 was speaking to Simon the sorcerer, he spoke about "the bond of iniquity"--that sin takes hold of people as sin had taken hold of Simon the sorcerer, and it will not let them go. There was not anything that Simon could do to free himself. The Apostle Paul in Titus 3:3 spoke of unregenerate people as "serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another." He uses the word "serving," serving as a bondservant, enslaved by these things, unable to set themselves free. Peter said of the false teachers of his day, in 2 Peter 2:19b, ". . . they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage."

So we are not talking about something that is just a figment of our imagination; this is the truth of God. When sin was first committed, man became enslaved to his sin, and man has been enslaved to his sin from that day until this. Because these things are true, man cannot come to God, he cannot come to Jesus Christ on his own. It is an absolutely hopeless situation. He is in complete bondage. If he is to be born again, it is not because he willed apart from the grace of God to be born again, but because God willed for him to be saved.

Now having said all of this, let me be also clear that man is completely responsible to God. If you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, then I hope you will realize these truths are given to us in the Word of God so that you can see your need of salvation, and see also that there is absolutely no hope that you could ever provide salvation for yourself. It is no wonder that David said, contemplating the sinfulness of his own heart, "But I am a worm, and no man." And you know, I, too, am a worm--and you are worms! This is what we are in God's sight--utterly depraved, utterly in bondage, completely hopeless because of our sin, under the judgment of God.

Now what is our hope that we can ever be changed? What is our hope that we can ever be forgiven? What is our hope that we can expect to see men turn to God? Will you turn to the first chapter of the Gospel of John? Our answer is there.

Man is, as many of us have heard another say, "incurably bad." Man has been hopelessly ruined by sin. Consequently, if there is to be salvation at all, it must come from God. I cannot help you; you

cannot help me as far as the work of salvation is concerned. We can convey the message to others, as the message has been conveyed to us, but the only possible solution for man's need is to be found in God. The Apostle Paul indicated that in the passage we were reading a moment ago in Ephesians 2. We saw that man was in bondage to the world, in bondage to Satan, and in bondage to his own sinful nature. But the very next verse, verse 4, says, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." So our hope is in God. But notice what it says in John 1, verses 11 through 13:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God,
even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

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Notice carefully what is taught in these verses. Do I receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and then I am born of God? Is that what the passage says? No. It says, I receive the Lord Jesus Christ because I am born of God. You see, that regenerating work of God must come first. As a result of that regenerating work I receive the Lord Jesus Christ. And what does it mean to receive? "As many as received him . . . even to them that believe on his name." So this means that my faith is a result of that regenerating work that God has done in my heart and in your heart. So our hope of salvation is not in what man can do for himself, but in what God does in the heart by the Holy Spirit as the Word of God is being preached. As the Spirit of God is using the Word, the Spirit of God will do that work of regeneration in a person's heart. And when a person is regenerated by the power of the Gospel and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the evidence of that is they believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. So my hope in preaching to you if you do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour, is that God is going to take His living, powerful Word which I have been reading to you, and through what Jesus Christ did when He died on the cross, will cause you to be born again. And the evidence that you have been transformed in your own heart is that your attitude toward God and toward Jesus Christ will be completely different. Your faith, your trust, which in itself is a gift of God, will be placed in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour.

I hope that this is clear. I hope that you can see why the Scriptures say that salvation is of the Lord. We cannot save ourselves. We would not even want to be saved if God had not moved upon our hearts. The only reason that you and I ever desire salvation is because of the way the Lord is using His Word. I trust that by the grace of God the Lord has sent His Word this morning into the heart of someone who needs to know the Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour, and, therefore, who will come to Christ!