

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

6. ON THE TOTAL DEPRAVITY OF THE HEART

The corruption of the human race after the fall, was radical and universal. "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually;" Gen. vi, 5.

It would seem surprising, that any one should read this passage in the Bible, and yet deny the doctrine of human depravity, did we not know the natural blindness of the understanding by reason of sin.

A painful truth is however plainly stated— that the heart of man is evil. And that this solemn truth may be placed in the strongest light, it is further added that not only the thoughts, but the imaginations of the thoughts of his heart are evil. By this declaration we learn how the fall has corrupted all the secret workings of the human mind; since the very outline or rude sketch of the thoughts is polluted.

If the fountain be thus poisoned, can we wonder at those deadly streams which issue from it? All who know themselves, through the teaching of the divine Spirit, can testify to the truth of this Scripture from their own experience. "The heart knows its own bitterness."

Oh! that sovereign grace may cast down every proud and sinful imagination which is contrary to the holy law of God, and bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Some, contending for a portion of natural goodness, may perhaps say— True, the imagination is often defiled; but must we acknowledge no remainders of virtue? What says the Scripture? "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is evil." Allowing that this is true, yet may there not be some mixture of good with the evil? What says the Scripture? "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil." Admitting this, yet may there not be some intervals of goodness? What says the Scripture? "every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart is only evil continually."

If this be indeed the state of man's heart, yet may not the innocent season of youth be an exemption from this awful charge? What says the Scripture? "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Gen. viii, 21.

"The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies." Ps. lviii, 3.

"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child:" Prov. xxii, 15. "Childhood and youth are vanity." Eccies. xi, 10.

And, as if determined to abase the pride of fallen man, and to place the doctrine of original sin beyond dispute; David, speaking under the influence of the Spirit of truth, declares, "I was shaped in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. li, 5.

Very many pertinent and important passages might be adduced, all of which attest this solemn truth of original sin. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one!" Job xiv, 4. "What is man that he should be clean; and he which is born of a woman that he should be righteous?" Job xv, 14. "how can he be clean that is born of a woman?" Job xxv, 4. Hence we conclude, with divine inspiration, that we are "by nature the children of wrath." Ephes. ii, 3; "that there is none righteous, no not one." Rom. iii, 10.

Oh! my soul, cavil not with your justly offended Creator, but confess your guilt, both original and actual. Seek for grace to lie low at his feet; and to accept with joyful heart those gracious offers of pardon and peace, which are so freely made to you, through the great propitiatory sacrifice of his well-beloved Son.

The grace of God when viewed, as it always ought to be, in connection with the wretched state of sinful man, shines like the beautiful rainbow on the darkened cloud. Its lovely hues cheer and delight the mind in the midst of surrounding gloom.

How consoling to a soul bowed down under a sense of guilt, are the following promises: "When I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you, LIVE; yes I said unto you, when you were in your blood, LIVE!" Ez. xvi, 6. Then comes the source of this mercy— "I have loved you with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you." Jer. xxxi, 3.

But how can a polluted creature be pleasing to a pure and holy God? Behold the effects of sovereign grace: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you; a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments and do them." Ez. xxxvi, 25 to 27.

The safety and perseverance of the redeemed is sweetly declared in the following delightful promise "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them; that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me" Jer. xxxii, 39, 49.

Support and final success are also promised to the believer under all the various trials and difficulties which he may be called upon to endure in the cause of his covenant God and Savior. "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you, with the right hand of my righteousness." Is. xli, 10. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you: and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you: when you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned; neither shall the

flame kindle upon you: for I am the Lord your God, the holy one of Israel, your Savior." Is. xliii, 2, 3.

For the present and everlasting consolation of the believer, a full and free forgiveness of all sin is graciously declared: "I even I, am he that blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins." Isa. xliii, 25. "I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and as a cloud your sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed you." Isa. xlv. 22. "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; you shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Isa. xlv. 17.

Well may the ransomed sinner exclaim: "Oh, Lord! I will praise you: though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away and you comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation." Isa. xii. 1, 2. "I will extol you, my God, Oh, King! and I will bless your name forever and ever. Every day will I bless you, and I will praise your name forever and ever." Ps. cxlv. 1. "Bless the Lord, Oh, my soul! and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, Oh, my soul! and do not forget all his benefits: who forgives all your iniquities; who heals all your diseases; who redeems your life from destruction; who crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Ps ciii. 1 to 4.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever. And let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen.

When I survey the human race,
And sin's deceitful windings trace,
Lord, what is man, amazed I cry,
That you for him should deign to die?
How vast the love that brought you down,
To take affliction's thorny crown,
Midst scoffs, the gorgeous robe to wear
Midst sneers, the sceptered reed to bear,
Yet with this crown and purple robe;
Your kingdom far exceeds the globe;
A kingdom wide as endless space,
Prepared for man through sovereign grace.

While others spurn this matchless love,
You, my warm affections move;
Drawn by your sacred Spirit, Lord,
May I adore the incarnate Word.

Then shall I live in heavenly rest,
And die in peace, supremely blest;
Borne on some friendly seraph's wing,
The praises of my God to sing.