

~Other Speakers M-R: Thomas Reade:

27. HUMAN CORRUPTION AND ABOUNDING GRACE

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Romans 5:20

All orthodox Christians agree on the doctrine of the Fall; that the whole human race fell in Adam, as their federal head; and that we are by nature the children of wrath. They agree in this truth, that death has passed upon all men, for all have sinned, and therefore lie under condemnation, and are exposed to the righteous judgment of God. The Scriptures are most clear on this solemn subject. This doctrine militates against the pride of our darkened understandings, and the boasted morality of the world. Some treat this doctrine as monstrous, others as fanatical. But all, who are taught of God, receive it in deep self-abasement. Lord give me grace to embrace, in the simplicity of faith, all those humbling truths of your holy word, which, at once, crucify self love, and prepare the heart to receive Jesus as the only Savior from guilt and condemnation.

The doctrine of the Fall and its direful consequences, may, in some small degree, be exemplified by what we witness around us. In how many families are certain maladies perpetuated, which are styled hereditary, descending from father to son, yes, even to children's children. How frequently have the profligacy and prodigality of parents entailed upon their posterity disease and poverty. What millions of our fellow-creatures have groaned from age to age under the iron yoke of one bloody conqueror. The conquests of Mahomet have to this day held in bondage the Christian churches in the East, while the spiritual despotism of Popery enslaves its millions in the West. When I compare the present state of man with his original formation- when I view him as he once was, perfect in holiness, peace, and love, and as he now is, full of iniquity, disquietude, and enmity, I feel the force of my Savior's words to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto you, You must be born again."

When I contemplate the Almighty Creator in all his infinite perfections, and man in all his vileness; when I survey the spotless mansions of glory, and the polluted habitations of earth; I am constrained to say, Amen, to my Savior's declaration, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born again of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

Let me well observe this important truth, I must be born again, not of water only, but of the Spirit. What does this teach me? Surely that a great change must necessarily take place, before a mass of corruption can be made fit to inherit incorruption. The change is great, but the power which effects it is omnipotent. The cause of this change is the sovereign love of God. With Him this blessedness originated, and by Him it is performed, otherwise it could not be said, "By grace are you saved." "Salvation is of the Lord." The means for effecting this change were ordained by infinite wisdom, and are revealed and applied to a lost world through the Holy Spirit. The end of this change was designed by the Father of mercies, to display the divine perfections, to destroy the powers of darkness, and to diffuse unnumbered blessings, in time and eternity, through the redemption of sinners by the death and glorification of His beloved Son.

Oh! how transporting will the heavenly anthem be! "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Lord! be graciously pleased to effect this unspeakably blessed change in my soul. I have daily to mourn over an evil heart of unbelief. I feel so much of self, mixing with my better motives; so much of earth, mixing with my spiritual duties; so much of distrust and slavish fear, mixing with my professed faith in you, that I may well exclaim with Job, "I abhor myself."

Lord! undertake for me. Hold me up and I shall be safe. Create in me a new and contrite heart. Wash away all my corruptions. Cover me with your spotless righteousness, and make me fit for the inheritance of the saints in light. Lord, enable me daily to come unto you, to spread all my needs, and sorrows, and sins before you; yes, to lay them all by faith at the foot of the Cross, where grace, and mercy, and truth unite to save, and bless such a hell-deserving sinner as I am. Oh! how sweet is your call of love- "Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Look unto me, and be saved." "Do not be afraid, only believe."

Lord enable me to come on the warrant of your word; for you have said, "Him that comes to me I certainly not cast out." Make my soul joyful in your salvation. Put a new song into my mouth, even a Psalm of thanksgiving unto my God.

How deadly are the fruits which unbelief produces; insensibility to eternal things; the alienation of the heart from God; a love for carnal delights. We naturally turn away from that which never captivates our affections. We choose darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil. The only obstacle to loving God supremely,

arises from the rebelliousness of our will to his holy law, and from an aversion to the humbling method of salvation, as revealed in the Gospel. This state of mind constitutes our guilt in his sight, and renders us deservedly the objects of his wrath.

Every day I have to mourn over this spiritual insensibility. I want to feel my heart all alive to God. I want to feel my soul melted with godly sorrow, and expanded with holy joy. I want to experience that indescribable emotion of contrition and peace which sweetly blends in the heart of the penitent believer, and excites the soul to praise, even when the eye is moistened with the tear of grief. Sorrow for sin, and joy in the Savior, form that peculiarity of feeling which a stranger cannot understand. Lord! may I daily know more of it. Give me a saving knowledge of yourself, and a growing taste for spiritual blessings.

All the angelic beings are under the perpetual influence of the highest love and reverence for God, and all of them delight to do his will. All the spirits of just men made perfect in heaven, are actuated by the same exalted principle of love. The Church on earth is taught by her divine Lord to pray, "May your will be done in earth as it is in heaven." The families in heaven and earth are one. If, then, a soul under the influence of this guilty disinclination of heart to love and serve God, should, in such a state, be called out of time into eternity, how could it be fit for the society of saints and angels, whose bosoms burn with everlasting love? How could such a soul enter into their enjoyments or employments? Heaven would be worthless, so far as he is concerned. It would be no place of happiness to such a soul. Every thing around it would run counter to the evil principle within him; and hence it is evident that, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

There are few delusions which men more successfully practice upon themselves than this- the hope of going to heaven when they die. This, like some healing plaster, is universally applied to ease the conscience. No matter how evil the life may be; Satan still whispers, as he did of old- "You shall not surely die." The sinner, trusting in the father of lies, goes on in his wickedness; thinks that God is too merciful to punish through eternity, the failings committed in time; and that all will end well at the last. Hell is truth learned too late!

O, my soul, pray without ceasing to be saved from these wiles of Satan; from this wretched state of alienation from God. The more I meditate on this important subject, the more I see the necessity for my being made a New Creature in Christ Jesus, before I can possibly relish or delight in the purchased possession. Many are apt to suppose, they must necessarily be happy, if they can only gain admittance into the celestial city, without considering what constitutes the bliss of heaven. Without love to God, without a delight in his service, without a hatred of sin, heaven would be no heaven to them, even if they could be admitted into it. "The pure in heart shall see God." "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Vain, then, are the hopes of the hypocrite. "Nothing evil will be allowed to enter—no one who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life." Against such, the door will be forever shut. Lord, renew my soul in righteousness. Give me a delight to do your will. Guard me against the deceitful workings of unbelief. Enable me to resist the wiles of the devil. Shine upon my path, and guide me, by your Spirit, to the realms of glory.

"Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Blessed declaration! Had it not been so, wretched would our condition now have been! We would have lain in the darkness of despair, waiting for the blackness of darkness forever! But, light has sprung up; the voice of mercy is heard, and sinners may rejoice in God their Savior. The God of all grace invites us to the mercy-seat. The Spirit of Grace conducts us there. "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."

How wonderful is the work of grace in the heart! It is a progressive work. It springs from God, and leads to God. The first operation of the Spirit in the soul of the sinner is LIGHT. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This light being a spiritual, searching light, produces conviction of the evil and turpitude of sin. This CONVICTION being of an awakening, softening nature, causes the feeling of deep contrition on account of original and actual transgression. CONTRITION, when abiding, leads to confession, to a humble, heartfelt acknowledgment of guilt and misery. CONFESSION, when flowing from a believing view of the Cross of Christ, ends in a blessed CONVERSION of soul to God, an entire surrender of the heart to him who claims it. When conviction, contrition, confession, and conversion, have formed the new creature in Christ Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit, then comes CONSOLATION, a loving spirit; a joyful spirit. Consolation being of a strengthening nature, produces CONFIRMATION in the ways of God, stability and strength. "The joy of the Lord is our strength." The whole ends in a full and final CONSUMMATION of all blessedness in the region of celestial glory.

Human Corruption and Abounding Grace

How precious are the ascending steps from earth to heaven. How glorious is the work of grace in the soul of man. Here wisdom, power, and love, are richly displayed. Pride has no share in this blessedness. God is the Author and Finisher of Salvation. To Him be all the praise throughout all ages. Amen and Amen.