

**~Other Speakers G-L: Aaron Hills:**

"The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live" (Eccle. 9:3).

God uses the most striking language conceivable about the wickedness of the human heart. "Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment" (Isa. 1:6). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" "Thou . . . knowest not that thou are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). In our text sinners are declared to be full of evil and morally insane.

**1. WE ASK: IS THIS LANGUAGE OF GOD TOO STRONG? Are there sufficient points of analogy to justify such strong figures of speech? Let us see.**

Notice that madness is a derangement of the intellectual powers. The judgment is dethroned. Reason does not act normally. Power of reflection is at least temporarily lost. Now, what is there in a wicked heart that is similar to this?

1. Sinners waste themselves in efforts to procure trifles, and neglect treasures infinitely valuable. What would be thought of such conduct in the realm of business? Suppose that one of the merchant princes, Wanamaker for instance, when he had ten thousand clerks or salesmen in his employ, had neglected all purchases and sales, bills receivable and bills payable, all accounts, all weighty and important affairs of his vast business, and spent his time in gathering bent pins and broken nails and scraps, and fragments and ravelings of his goods. How soon he would have been adjudged insane! Just imagine Carnegie, the great iron prince, neglecting vast interests of his business in which hundreds of millions of dollars were involved, and wandering about the streets picking up bits of coal, rags and cigar stumps in the gutter, like a gutter bum. Everybody would have said, "Carnegie has lost his mind!" But sinners behave in precisely that way. They chase after the baubles of time, honors, popularity, applause, wealth, pleasure, which a breath of trouble will blow away, and neglect character and salvation, the eternal treasures of the soul. They profess to believe in God's existence, but they pay more attention to Peter Smith or Bill Jones! They confess that God has infinite power: but they treat Him with utter contempt. They know that sin is dangerous; but they pursue and practice it with mad eagerness. Ah, they know better! It is not a mistake of the head. It is moral madness.

2. This spiritual insanity is seen by the way sinners treat their best friends. It is a strange fact that insane people are almost universally inclined to injure those most dear to them. A famous congressman of Ohio was killed by his own son in a fit of insanity. A young man in Circleville, Ohio, killed his own loving mother. A deacon of the writer's church was a most devoted and affectionate husband. He gradually lost his mind from the effect of a sunstroke. In his delirium he assaulted that precious old wife with whom he had lived for nearly half a century, and also another deacon of the same church whom he had known and loved from boyhood.

Sam Jones told us of two brothers who were slowly killing their mother by their wretched vices. One day the father called the family together, and handed a revolver to one son and a long knife to the other, and said, "There is your mother, now stab and shoot her to death, make quick work of it. It is infinitely more merciful than to kill her by inches as you are now doing by your sins." So multitudes of sinners are the worst enemies of their own families and friends, and are doing more to curse them than all their professed enemies would even think of doing.

Think how the sinners treat God who loves them, and gives them every blessing they enjoy; and added to all the rest, gave His Son to die that they might live. They scorn all the pleadings of divine mercy, treat Christ himself with contemptuous neglect. There is no possible explanation of such morally insane conduct, except that "madness is in their hearts while they live."

3. The moral insanity of sinners is seen by their treatment of fiction as if it were reality, and their treatment of reality as if it were fiction. If you ever have visited an insane asylum you certainly did not fail to notice what strange absurdities had taken possession of the minds of the inmates. And no two of them alike. It is precisely so with sinners. The eternal truths of God, which have brought salvation to millions, through the ages, they treat as if fiction and idle tales; while every foolish fad of modern infidelity and every empty ism that Satan can invent to delude and damn souls is run after with the most eager avidity. God's truths are set at naught and Satan's lies are welcomed and adopted. It proves to a certainty that their moral reason is dethroned, and madness is in their hearts.

4. The moral madness of sinners is seen in their disregard of their spiritual possessions. Suppose a multimillionaire should appear on the public street throwing broadcast hundred-dollar bills, and thousand-dollar bonds, certificates of stocks, notes, deeds of property and costly jewels. How quickly men would conclude he was insane!

Suppose a princely farmer should order his hired men to shoot his blooded horses and cattle, set fire to his barns and fences, and his fields of ripening grain, and his dwellings! Think you his servants would obey? No, indeed! They would conclude he was a madman and put him in an asylum. But how do men sow broadcast the treasures of their soul! How they exert themselves to kill reverence for God and the Bible and sacred things! How they murder conscience and destroy faith, and stifle gratitude and love and waste purity and break down their power of will to choose and do right. They know better. Ah, it is insanity of heart!

5. Men show their madness of heart by absurd attempts to achieve impossibilities. Suppose that the head of the Vanderbilt family should give orders to all our iron firms for structural iron of such vast weight and size as it is impossible to construct, and should assemble thousands of workmen on the ocean shore to construct piers vaster than the pyramids and high as the mountains. And when questioned about the strange proceedings, he should inform the astonished world that he was building a suspension bridge across the Atlantic to make a European connection for the New York Central! How soon his heirs would shut him up and stop his insane folly! But God sees sinners doing things quite as absurd. They are seeking blessedness by defying the holy laws of God. They try to get life in a career of sin, forgetting that the wages of sin is death! They try to bridge the impassable gulf between them and heaven, by false hopes, false doctrines, and worse practice. Only moral madness could pursue such insane folly.

6. Madmen are uninfluenced by counsel. They take no advice. They laugh at danger and heed no warning. Is it not equally true of sinners? Godly parents say, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Christian friends invite, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good." Earnest ministers plead, "We then, as ambassadors for Christ, beseech you, as in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Even the Holy Spirit urges, "Today, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." But parents, friends, preachers and God himself, are turned down with idiotic mockery and the guilty souls rush on madly to their impending doom!

11. How is such conduct to be explained? What malign cause produces such a havoc of destiny? It is not any want of intellect; for noble minds are among the wicked. Nor is it from lack of knowledge. Men have the law of God written in their very hearts. It is from no lack of natural endowments, or a proper balance of faculties. Oh no! The text gives the explanation. "The hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live." Downright wickedness betrays them into such stupendous folly. And back of all this outward wickedness is the depravity, the carnal nature which makes them go stark mad in sin. This innate depravity, when cherished, becomes deliberately, obstinately, inexcusably, insanely wicked.

#### Remarks:

1. Moral insanity is far more deplorable than mental insanity. The courts never hold the mentally insane responsible for their conduct. But this is something for which God and men do hold people responsible. It is a solemn, awful sight to see a Nebuchadnezzar lose his mind, to see a mighty intellect go into clouds of darkness! But Oh, to see such a soul lost in ungodly ambition, sensuality, drunkenness, worldly lusts! No other human evil can be compared with this.

2. It is enough to call forth the compassion of all men. How our pity goes out to those who have lost their minds! They are haunted by wild vagaries, troubled by foolish suspicions, excited by needless alarms. All beholders are filled with pity, sympathy, and a desire to help. But Oh, these morally insane, who are driven by an evil spirit to utter ruin! How sad the spectacle! It awakes the compassion of God, angels and men.

3. No wonder God is compelled to confine the wicked by themselves. We dare not let the mentally insane run at large. Neither property nor life would be safe. But they are not half so dangerous as a modern infidel in a university chair, breaking down the faith in God of a whole body of students. No man jeopardizes human interests as does a distiller, or a saloon-keeper, or a libertine. A half-crazed scoundrel shot President Garfield and another shot President McKinley. But what lunatic is half so dangerous to human government as a mad rebel against God -- a Voltaire, or Tom Paine, or Bob Ingersoll or a modern infidel in a University chair, breaking down the faith of college students, is to the divine government? God gives probation to such a little while, but sooner or later, He is compelled to incarcerate the incurably morally insane in the mad-house of hell.

## Moral Insanity

**4. But Jesus can cure completely. He cast the demons out of the insane Gadarene, and proved Himself the master of moral insanity. The prodigal son had not had a sane hour for years; but at last, "he came to himself." Conversion breaks the spell of the world's delusions, sanctification wholly restores to the right mind. None but the sanctified have all the cause of moral madness taken out. None but they are perfectly sane. Will you let this mighty Savior deal with your case, and make you "every whit whole," clothed and in your right mind?**