

# The Depravity of Man

## LESS IS MORE

Believers who have the most knowledge are not necessarily the most spiritual. Some may and do walk more honorably and more comfortably with two talents than others with five. He who experimentally knows his own weakness, and depends simply upon the Lord, will surely thrive, though his acquired attainments and abilities may be but small; and he who has the greatest gifts, the clearest judgment, and the most extensive knowledge, if he indulges himself in high thoughts of his advantages, is in imminent danger if mistaking and falling at every step; for the Lord will suffer none whom He loves to boast in themselves. He will guide the meek with his eyes, and fill the hungry with good things; but the rich He sends away empty. It is an invariable maxim in His kingdom, that whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

John Newton

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## THE TRUE CHARACTER OF UNBELIEF

In all unbelief there are two things — a good opinion of one's self and a bad opinion of God. Man's good opinion of himself makes him think it quite possible to win God's favor by his own religious performances; and his bad opinion of God makes him unwilling and afraid to put his case wholly into His hands. The object of the Holy Spirit's work (in convincing of sin) is to reduce his estimate of his own character that he shall think of himself as God does, and so cease to suppose it possible that he can be justified by any excellency of his own. The Spirit then alters his evil opinion of God, so as to make him see that the God with whom he has to do is really the God of all grace!

Horatio Bonar

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## Lame to Spiritual Things

The admirers of nature talk much of the sovereignty of the will, as if it alone had escaped the fall, and that no more than moral suasion is needed to open it to Christ; that is, that God needs do no more to save men than the devil does to damn them. But if ever God makes you sensible of what the work of saving conversion is, you will quickly find that your will is lame to spiritual things; you will cry out of a wounded will, as well as out of a

dark head and a hard heart. You will quickly find that, "It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His own good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

John Flavel

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To say we are all sinners is one thing; to have an idea of what sin must be in the sight of God is quite another. Sin is too much a part of ourselves to allow us to see it as it is; we do not feel our own moral deformity.

J. C. Ryle

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Why do men not like our gospel? Because they do not like our Lord! They may vent their anger at us, but it is Christ they hate. They may persecute and slander us, but they do it to us only because the true object of their rage, Christ, is out of their reach. Let us, therefore, show pity, not anger.

Joe Terrell

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Men. What are they? What can they do? What is their power? Of what can they boast? They are only vermin and rottenness; still will they wish to justify themselves thereupon ... to know who we are, let us come to God. For man never will recognize himself with his neighbors; but it is when we have raised our eyes on high, and we reckon that we must come before the judgment-seat of Him Who knows everyone, Who is not like mortal men who are satisfied with bits of trash, and before Whom we cannot commend our outward shells, which are all those good-for-nothing things that are so much prized here. When, then, we shall know that all that vanishes before God, then we shall learn to put ourselves in our place, and no longer be so elevated with such pride.

John Calvin

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*The fool has said in his heart, There is no God. (Psalm 14:1)*

Why do men resist God's authority, against which they cannot dispute? and disobey his commands, unto which they cannot devise to frame an exception? What but the spirit of enmity, can make them regret "so easy a yoke," reject so "light a burden," shun and fly off from so peaceful and pleasant paths? yea, and take ways that so manifestly "take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death," rather choosing to perish than obey? is not this the very height of enmity? What further proof would we seek of a disaffected and implacable heart? Yet to all this we may cast in that fearful addition,

their saying in their heart, "No God;" as much as to say, "O that there were none!" This is enmity not only to the highest pitch of wickedness, to wish their common parent extinct, the author of their being, but even unto madness itself. For in the forgetful heat of this transport, it is not thought on that they wish the most absolute impossibility; and that, if it were possible, they wish, with his the extinction of their own and of all being; and that the sense of their hearts, put into word, would amount to no less than a direful and most horrid execration and curse upon "God and the whole creation of God at once! As it, by the blasphemy of their poisonous breath, they would wither all nature, blast the whole universe of being, and make it fade, languish, and drop into nothing. This is to set their mouth against heaven and earth, themselves, and all things at once, as if they thought their feeble breath should overpower the omnipotent Word, shake and shiver the adamantine pillars of heaven and earth, and the Almighty fiat be defeated by their nay, striking at the root of all! So fitly is said, "The fool hath in his heart" muttered thus. Nor are there few such fools; but this is plainly given us as the common character of apostate man, the whole revolted race, of whom it is said in very general terms, "They are all gone back, there is none that doeth good." This is their sense, one and all, that is, comparatively; and the true state of the case being laid before them, it is more their temper and sense to say, "No God," than to repent, "and turn to him." What mad enmity is this! Nor can we devise into what else to resolve it.

John Howe (1630-1704)

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There is a vital sense in which "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and in which all the realities of Christian experience are utterly hid from his perceptions. To speak to him of communion with God, of a sense of pardon, of the lively expectation of heaven, of the witness of the Holy Ghost, of the struggles of the spiritual life, would be like reasoning with a blind man about colours, or with one deaf about musical harmony.

John Morison (1829)

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When the Gospel first comes to a place, though the people are going on in sin, they may be said to sin ignorantly; they have not yet been warned of their danger. Some are drinking down iniquity like water; others more soberly burying themselves alive in the cares and business of the world; others find a little time for what they call religious duties, which they persevere in, though they are utter strangers to the nature or the pleasure of spiritual worship; partly, as thereby they think to bargain with God and to make amends for such sins as they do not choose to relinquish; and partly because it gratifies their pride, and affords them (as they think) some ground for saying, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men." The preached Gospel declares the vanity and danger of these several ways which sinners choose to walk in. It declares, and demonstrates, that, different as they appear from each other, they are equally remote from the path of safety and peace, and all tend to the same point, the destruction of those who persist in

them. At the same time it provides against that despair into which men would be otherwise plunged, when convinced of their sins, by revealing the immense love of God, the glory and grace of Christ, and inviting all to come to him, that they may obtain pardon, life, and happiness. In a word, it shows the pit of hell under men's feet, and opens the gate and points out of the way to heaven.

John Newton

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"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom? " That is, the unrighteous neither intelligently apprehend, nor spiritually enjoy the kingdom of God. If it were possible for an unregenerate man to be lifted up to the heights of glory, and to find himself surrounded by the pure spirits of the glorified who are washed in atoning blood and clothed in the spotless righteousness of their God and Saviour, he would wish himself out as soon as possible. Everything in heaven is foreign to the feelings, and to the very existence of the fleshly free-willer. O, no! None can have access to God but those blessed with the mind of Christ — none can enter into the kingdom of God but by the Spirit of Christ — none can enter into glory but in the purity, perfections and person of Christ. All who dwell in Christ and in whom Christ dwells by His blessed Spirit, shall reign in life and glory with Him, and fully enjoy it to eternal ages.

Thomas Bradbury

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The love of life is a very frequent and pernicious snare, which a sense of God's love must deliver us from being entangled by. What so desirable as life, if a man have no place in the heart of God? This is the greatest temporal blessing, and nothing can outdo it, but the favour of the God of our life; and this excels indeed. What comparison is there between the breath in our nostrils, and the favour of an eternal God any more than there is between an everlasting light and a poor vanishing vapour. Who would not, therefore, hate his own life, which hangs in doubt continually before him, and of which he can have no assurance, when he knows that the living God is his certain portion? Who would not freely yield up and part with ten thousand such lives, one after another, rather than the wrath of God should be kindled but a little.

Timothy Cruso

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## THE UTTER POVERTY OF MAN

In the beginning of my experience in the things of God, which is now more than twenty-nine years ago, I had this truth impressed upon my conscience, as I have reason to believe, very powerfully and very distinctly, by the finger of God— that I could know nothing, but by divine teaching; have nothing, but by divine giving; and be nothing, but

by divine making. And this truth thus impressed upon my conscience, so far from being erased by any subsequent experience, either of myself or of the Lord, has only been more and more deepened from that time to this. I think I can at times see the wisdom, as well as the goodness, of God, in tracing that truth on my heart in the first beginnings of grace; for I can perceive several benefits springing out of it. Just at that time my natural mind was very strongly bent upon human knowledge, for I had spent many years in various studies; and had it not been counteracted by divine teaching, I might have attempted to make myself a Christian, as I had previously made myself a linguist. Again, it set grace as a divine jewel in my heart's affections, and compared with it, everything else in my eyes was but dung and dross. A third benefit which I see at times to have sprung out of it, was, that it brought me to admire grace in others, where ever I might see it. It not only brought me down to stand on a level with the most ignorant and uneducated who possess grace, but very often in my soul's feelings sunk me very far below them; for I could see in them clearly that grace which darkness of mind had often hidden from myself. Grace, in the first instance, having thus been commended to my conscience, it has taught me ever since so to esteem, admire, and love it, wherever I can recognize it. Nor do I think that I should be very far from the mark, if I say that the apostle Paul, though I would not be so presumptuous as to compare myself for a moment with him, was not of a different mind; for who so much as he exalted the grace of God, and the teaching and testimony of the blessed Spirit?

J. C. Philpot

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## ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WORD

I judge people by their attitude toward the Word of God. A lost man does not believe the Bible, a saved man does. You know God has to work a miracle in a man to get him to listen to something he does not believe. The Lord said to the Jews of His day, "If you believed Moses, you would believe Me." People do not believe the Bible is God's Word and yet the only way a man is saved is by listening to that which he does not believe. What a miracle it will be if God ever fixes you so you will not just attend services, but where you begin to listen to God's Word. I think I have been preaching all these years to a generation of people who seem to wish to trust in the work of Christ, but not fall in love with Him. And thus hell is full of people who believed a fact, but never have been joined to the Lord Jesus Christ. I cannot understand that type of salvation or what a sinner expects when he does not desire to be under the rule of Christ, but only rebels against His rule. I cannot understand a salvation that turns out men and women who do not intend, in the deep recesses of their soul, to become willing bondslaves of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say to you, my friend, that church members who live in known sin; who do not pant after holiness; and who have no love for Christ, I say to you, they are in mortal danger and they are on the road to hell and know it not.

Rolphe Barnard