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Reformation  
&  
Revival

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This is what happens when people come to Christ. Today in our country a remarkable number of people claim to be born again. The observation has been made that, if that is true, then surely we ought to see some signs of it in our social order. That we see so little of it is surely an indication that this profession is not grounded in fact. When true repentance takes place it shows itself in the transformation of many who come to Christ and wish to live in subjection to His lordship over society and the social order.

May you and I live to see a day when God's promise is fulfilled: "I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground" (Isa. 44:3).

**Author**

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**T**he church is swelling like the belly of a starving man." With this thought we began in the last article to examine the doctrinal void in the typical evangelical church. Now we will look at the first two of five forgotten doctrines to be explored. Both historically and theologically it can be argued that such doctrines as those we will examine are instrumental in revivals of religion. It is my prayer that they will light a torch of spiritual zeal and concern in the reader's heart. Think with me now about these two mammoth doctrines: the depravity of man and the judgment of the damned.

**A Thorough Depravity**

The doctrine of the depravity of man has been trivialized and neglected to such an extent that pressing home even the basics of this teaching to the churches, your friends, and even your family, may elicit less than rave reviews. *Teach it still!* Neglect it at the peril of losing the whole meaning and necessity of salvation. A Christian soldier without an understanding of depravity is a man without a weapon. How weak is the toothpick of psychoanalysis compared with this giant spear the size of a weaver's beam! This doctrine alters the landscape of man's thinking. It is a prairie fire which clears out his false notions and levels his proud thoughts. Man can only love it when his heart is changed to boast in God.

What benefit will the believer have in studying this doctrine? Knowing these truths will have these effects:

1. *It will produce more gratitude.* It is, in fact, the ground floor of the whole structure of gratitude. Understand it even a little and you will love God a lot.
2. *It will increase concern.* Know man and his sin and you will want to be a rescuer. You would never wish a man, any man, the kind of bondage inflicted by sin.
3. *It will give you more tolerance of others.* When a believing woman says of her unconverted spouse, "I just can't live

with that man!" I know that she has not grasped the doctrine of sin.

4. *It will make you more intent on being separate from the sins of the flesh.* "What benefit did you reap at that time from the things you are now ashamed of? Those things result in death!" (Rom.6:21)

It is true: No man is as bad as he can be. This is not what depravity means. This issue of depravity is not so much about degrees of sin as about the fabric of man's being. It is about who man is—he is constituted a sinner. Los Angeles may have more or less smog on any given day, but the air you breathe there is always smog. So the man without Christ is always a sinner, whether he expresses his sin in a greater or lesser way. We say that he is *totally* depraved to emphasize that every part of him is included (John 5:42; Rom. 8:7; Eph. 4:18; Heb. 3:12). Fallen man is therefore completely incapable of impressing a holy God by any self-initiated actions or thoughts; he is equally incapable of changing his preference for sin and self—that is, unless God regenerates him (John 1:13; 3:5; 6:44; 8:34; 15:5; Rom. 8:7-8; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:5; Eph. 2:1, 8-10; etc.). This bad news of depravity precedes the good news of salvation in Christ and is a necessary part of the convicting work of the Holy Spirit on the non-believers who are being drawn to Christ.

#### **Is Man Really That Bad?**

When Paul said, "We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin" (Rom.3:9b), he did not introduce a new or novel thought. As we shall explore, this domination of sin and, therefore, death began in our first parent Adam, and so, by imputation, to us. Because all sinned in Adam, all die (Rom.5:12). As Dr. John Gerstner repeatedly stresses: We are not *well* as say the liberals (thus saying man does not need salvation at all); we are not *sick* as so many well-meaning evangelicals imply (thus giving

man some abilities in the salvation process, as weakly as they might be employed); rather, we are *dead*. Dead is dead. We are completely under the dominion of sin in the unbelieving state, having no hope in ourselves of rising up from our caskets to life. Dabney says:

A corpse may be a little emaciated, still warm, still supple; it may have a tinge of color in the cheek and a smile on its lips: it may be still precious and beautiful in the eyes of them that loved it. But it is dead, and a loathsome putrefaction approaches, sooner or later. It is only a question of time (D.L. Dabney, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*, Baker, reprint 1985, p. 324).

To see this nature of man as it is, take a look at Romans 3:10-12:

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Let us break down the above quote into its parts to view the corpse more closely.

1. *The unregenerate have no righteousness.* By this the Apostle does not mean that men are never neighborly, kind to some extent, and sacrificial on occasion. He means that man has not one ounce of righteousness *before God*, since sin permeates all he is.

2. *The unregenerate have no understanding.* Ungodly man does not know so as to appreciate and love the gospel. He may understand its tenets in some scholastic sense, but he does not understand it in his experience, nor does he relish whatever he knows (2 Cor.2:14; Matt. 16:17; Matt.11:25-27, etc.).

3. *The unregenerate have no desire for God.* They want what God offers but not God Himself. Hence the rich young man of Mark 10:17 wanted eternal life but not the God who demanded all his treasures.

4. *The unregenerate are worthless, wasted, useless.* The picture here is one of corruption to the point of worthlessness. Like bread now moldy, they are good for nothing eternal. Scores of historical figures have been popular with men but are nothing with God.

5. *The unregenerate are bereft of any truly good actions.* We must not say that they are incapable of doing something good as far as man is concerned. But that is as far as it goes. If we could know the heart, we would see the iciness of selfishness even in the heat of benevolence. Remember this: "If I give all I possess to the poor . . . but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13:3). If man is unrighteous as to his nature, he can produce no truly righteous deeds. "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit" (Matt. 7:18). This is the way God sees it.

### It Gets Worse

When Paul goes on in his explanation of what it means to be under sin and, therefore, totally depraved, he gathers more Old Testament verses to say some seemingly outlandish things about mankind.

Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes (Romans 3:13-18).

Has the Bible been accurate here? When you think of the kind, older lady who is your unconverted neighbor, you are prone to think that Paul was given to hyperbole on this

subject. But was he? The fact that we initially question such strong statements is reflective of the overwhelming consensus in evangelicalism that man is not nearly as bad as the biblical writers indicate. Even though the Bible states that men are murderers and liars (the principal accusations of this text), and even though it states it boldly in the face of apparent contradictions in the people we know, the biblical account is absolutely accurate. Paul is not given to hyperbole, though he is certainly colorful and pointed in his choice of Old Testament texts to paint the picture. Here are the reasons we know he has spoken accurately about man:

1. *All non-Christians are children of Satan and bear the nature of the devil himself.* Just as believers have the fullness of Christ without all of that fullness being readily apparent, so the non-Christian has the fullness of Satan, without all of that fullness being visibly expressed.

"You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

2. *God often describes the individual from the heart, and thus the hidden things are the actual things.* Notice how God views a hateful man: "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3:15).

If anyone is prone to doubt the craving for murder within the heart of the unregenerate, he need only look more closely at the movies and television programs which receive the best ratings. Men love violence. They love what their father loves. It sells because of the depraved heart of man.

3. *All persons will express themselves according to their nature when under enough pressure.* Even on this earth we see that the effects of pressure reveal the inner stuff of the man. Given

enough of it, even the kind little lady across the street will hate, lie, and kill. But place the believer under pressure and, though at first you may see the dross burning off, his final state will be purer. The believer going through the fire will love God more and will be sweeter, more humble, and generally much improved for it all (1 Pet. 1:6-7; Matt. 13:5,21). Turn up the heat on the non-believer and his inner nature will be patently obvious. Put him in hell, and he will gnash his teeth at God. Though his anger does him no good, he still cannot help but rage. How clearly this is seen in Revelation 16:8-11 when, knowing full well that God is inflicting the judgment, the non-believer curses and blasphemes God. He cannot help being what he is, though he may not know what he is without pressure coming to bear.

4. *There is perfectly adequate evidence even now that a person without grace is deceitful and destructive.* My friend who served in the last World War tells of coming into a concentration camp in Germany and seeing the bodies of Jews stacked like firewood. What could bring one of the most sophisticated nations of the world to such a place? They only gave fuller expression to what has always been in the hearts of all men.

Consider abortion. What a mistake we make when we implicate the mother and the doctor alone. The spouses and boyfriends, the parents who encourage it for their reputation, the counselors and agencies who support it, the nurses who stand beside the doctor, the receptionist who receives the girl, the hospitals who allow it, the society which does not speak against it—all these and more share in the murder.

There are many forms of destructive behavior. Take man's preoccupation with sex. Ninety million people in America have seen *Oh, Calcutta!* in which the first scene is of a man and woman completely disrobing before the audience. The divorces, the homosexuality, the anger, the

substance abuse, the lying, the materialism, the crudity, the manipulation, etc.—is this not enough to let us know that man is precisely as God makes him out to be?

But how did we get into this state?

#### Adam I Am

The first line of the very first textbook printed in North America, *The New England Primer*, contained this simple profundity: "In Adam's fall we sinned all." It could not be put more plainly. We sinned in Adam as our representative head. Paul stated: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because *all sinned*" (Rom. 5:12, ital. mine). And again, "For as in Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22). Thus man, having sinned in his representative, is born dead in trespasses and sins. David said, "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Psalm 51:5).

Man does not hover in some suspended elevation above the two options of the first and second Adam. We are either in Christ or in Adam. Since man is not born in Christ by natural birth but must be regenerated for that to be so, we begin under our natural and spiritual head, Adam. I know of no other provision than the regenerating work of the Spirit to take care of this predicament. Again, "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all [that is, all regenerated] shall be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). We are not in between, waiting for a resolution, but are born in Adam the first, and must be reborn into Adam the second.

We say then that our depravity is the result of the fall of Adam, and in that fall we all fell *totally*, or in every part of our being. This is what is called original sin. This sin is enough to damn us. From the outset, even as babies, we manifest our fallen nature by committing *actual* sin. Give a sweet-looking baby an extra hundred pounds of muscle and bone and you will see that even a baby would kill if he does not get

what he wants—and when he wants it! He seems innocent only because he does not have the physical ability to do what he desires. Thankfully, God did not give babies the power to carry out their selfish urges. By the time that baby gets older, he will learn to manipulate with more finesse and subtlety. He will be a more clever sinner, but a sinner nonetheless.

Modern evangelicalism has operated under the false notion that we are never to offend by such a harsh doctrine as the depravity of man. Nothing could be further from the truth. Just read the New Testament to see it. When the sword of conviction kills a man, he is ready for a Savior *and* a Lord. Is this not the emphasis of true revival? It is revival preaching to carefully unwrap the shroud from the corpse and show men and women what God actually sees. It is apparent that this kind of truth is not known to any great extent in our age. Where is the crying for mercy? In fact, most believers I know have never heard anyone cry out for mercy.

Original and actual sin demands a holy response from God. This leads us to the second forgotten doctrine which has, in the past, been taught in times of reformation and revival.

#### The Judgment of the Damned

Man without Christ is damned. He is damned now. He is damned for eternity. What makes matters all the more shocking to us is the glaring reality that we actually *know* people who are in hell right now. I find it hard to believe that we do not say more about such a *present* judgment.

Recently I was with a pastor in California driving through the parking lot of a shopping mall. What we saw turned our stomachs. Before us was a beautiful black and white kitten, obviously the pet of some loving family. Yet the kitten had been hit by a car, and one third of its head was completely

shaved off. What made the sight more pathetic was the way the kitten writhed, flipping up and down on the pavement like a fish on the bank. What would you do? With considerable sadness, the pastor did what I believe anyone else would have done in that situation. He drove the car over the kitten to take it out of its misery. It was an experience we will not soon forget. Yet think for a moment. Would it not be far better for a man or woman to be a kitten hit by a car, writhing on the concrete and run over until dead, than to die as an unconverted man or woman? And is it not also true that the writhing and anguish of that kitten for a few moments is nothing to be compared to the agony of a soul in hell for eternity?

If that is true, then the issue of the judgment of those without Christ is serious business about which we should have as much knowledge as possible. Christ was not out of balance when He said so much about hell and judgment. And He said more about it than about heaven. In fact, the Bible speaks four-to-one in favor of the wrath and judgment of God over against the benevolence and mercy of God. Yet most people I know have never even heard an entire message on hell.

It is obvious that we can only deal in this article with a small portion of this weighty subject. Let us focus our attention on an often misunderstood and convicting question: Are the damned judged for individual sins?

#### The Particular Nature of the Judgment

We are well aware of the fact that non-believers are judged for just that—their non-belief. “Whoever does not believe stands condemned already” (John. 3:18). Is, then, this all they are judged for? No. The Scripture teaches that *all* acts of sin are brought into scrutiny and justly punished at the judgment of the damned. For instance, Matthew says that “the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory

with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done” (Matt. 16:27). Paul, as well, states: “But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God’s wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed. God ‘will give to each person according to what he has done’” (Rom. 2:5-6). But perhaps no more graphic depiction of particular judgment has ever been given than that which John records having seen in the Apocalypse. Please note the italics.

Then I saw a Great White Throne and Him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from His presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and *books* were opened. Another *book* was opened, which is the *book of life*. *The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books*. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and *each person was judged according to what he had done*. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the *book of life*, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev. 20:11-15, ital. mine).

It is quite apparent that there are both *a book* and *books* to factor in when thinking about the judgment. We are all aware of the book of life. It is a simple matter to understand that only those who are elected by the Father, redeemed by the Son, and sanctified by the Spirit are in this book. If you are not recorded in this book you are cast into the lake of fire. Yet there are also books, plural. These are the books of the words, thoughts, and actions of men and women and children of all eternity. It is worth considering from this passage that the Hades aspect of hell (which is the real hell; see Luke 16:19-31) seems to be more or less a general or

equal punishment for the damned. All non-believers who have died are in Hades now. Yet there will be a day when those in Hades will be brought up to judgment (Rev. 20:13), a judgment of deeds. The final state (the lake of fire) will be worse than the first, precisely because of the issuing of additional punishment for specific sins at this Great White Throne judgment. Hades then will be thrown into the lake of fire.

It has been a common misconception that all sins are the same, and that what one does as a non-believer is not so important since the only significant thing is whether or not he believes. All else is assumed to be paid for by Christ on the cross. But something countering this is found in these verses. All sins are not the same but have varying intensities and punishment, and non-believers are not absolved from particular sins through the cross but are liable for every one of them. The cross is of *no* benefit to them.

May I remind you that there are greater and lesser commands (Matt. 5:19; Matt. 22:34-40; James 5:12; Col. 3:14) and greater and lesser sins (John 19:11; Matt. 12:30-32; 1 John 5:16-17, etc.). Therefore, the final consequence of those sins is greater or lesser as well—they have differing weights (Luke 12:47-48; Mark 12:40, Jas. 3:1-2; Matt. 7:1-2, etc.). Jesus said that every idle word would be brought up in the judgment (Matt. 12:33-37); Paul said God will even judge “men’s secrets” (Rom. 2:16).

All that might come into play in a human court and more will be considered in the evaluation of the damned by our impeccably holy God. Consider especially the augmented culpability accrued by means of committing sins against knowledge. To know more is to be worse off in hell (Luke 12:47-48). Jesus told the common people living around the Sea of Galilee that it would be worse for them in the judgment than for Sodom and Gomorrah if they did not repent. They were not homosexuals as were the citizens of



those ancient sinful cities. How can such a statement be made? It is because the sin they commit is against the light of Christ's own presence, a privilege the ancient cities did not have.

What a dilemma the individual is in when dabbling with the idea of becoming Christ's. He hears of Christ in order to get a grasp of the situation, yet to that very point in time refuses to come to Christ on His terms. To be an inch away from Christ while yet in rebellion is to make one liable for the severest wrath. No wonder the people who heard such preaching in times past were either stirred to repentance or enraged at the preacher.

Jonathan Edwards was brought logically to the point of saying, "The damned in hell would give the whole world if they could for their sins to be one less." Since every sin increases punishment by a certain increment, and that multiplied times eternity, such a statement is entirely reasonable. God, in fact, is angrier with some people who are alive right now than others who are already in hell. If it were not for the absolute hopelessness of it and the magnitude of the consequence for self-murder, it would be better for the non-believer to end his life today than to go on sinning, making hell that much worse. Is it a surprise to us now why Jesus said not to fear the One who could kill the body, but "rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell"? (Matt. 10:28)

How dreadful to think of never-ending punishment for each sin. Yet hell has to be eternal because of the inability of men to actually satisfy what only Christ was able to satisfy—the just demands of the Father. Non-believers will not even approximate payment for their sins against an infinitely holy God, even after thousands of years of punishment. If that were not enough, men and women will continue to sin in hell, gnashing their teeth in rage against God. God, who cannot stop being just, must continue to inflict more

and more punishment for every such blasphemous thought and word which will spew out of their ungodly hearts. In hell sinners become greater sinners, fueling their own fires. Hell, therefore, never ends as long as sin shall last.

The doctrine of the judgment of the damned should be taught by *you*. Your children, even very young children, should fear hell. It seems incongruous that we teach our children with all kinds of graphic emphasis not to walk out into the streets, but fail to tell them of hell. We must cooperate with the Holy Spirit in His convicting process by emphasizing the sinner's judgment (John 16:15). Even so, with all our preaching there will be scores of people who will come to quake in fear of hell, but who will not love the Savior who rescues from hell. Sadly, some of those people may be in our own family. Theirs is a double misery—the fear of hell now and the reality of their fears later. Even so, the truth of their judgment must be made clear, and the gospel must be made the dividing line.

Solomon Stoddard, having himself experienced several revivals of religion in his 60 years of pastoring the First Church of Northampton, Massachusetts (died 1729), spoke of the failure of preachers and committed believers to make these very truths understood. Think about his statement and resolve to be more forthright from now on.

When Men don't preach much about the Danger of Damnation, there is want of good Preaching. Some Preachers preach much about Moral Duties and the blessed estate of Godly Men, but don't seek to awaken Sinners and make them sensible of their Danger. . . . These Things are very needful in their places to be spoken unto; but if Sinners don't often hear of Judgment and Damnation, few will be converted. Many Men are in a Deep Sleep and flatter themselves as if there were no Hell, or at least that God will not deal so harshly with them as to Damn them. Psalm 36:2. Ministers

must give them no Rest in such a Condition. They must pull them as Brands out of the Burnings. . . . Ministers are faulty when they speak to them with Gentleness, as Eli rebuked his Sons. Christ Jesus often warned them of the Danger of Damnation" (Matt. 5:29,30).

Every day be reminded that the man you just spoke to, the woman you casually greeted only moments ago, the child you patted on the head last evening, will one day stand before the Judge of all the earth. As the Puritan Henry Smith said, "They are punished because they ever sin as long as they could, while mercy was offered unto them; therefore because they would not be washed, they shall be drowned (in the lake of fire)." Occupy your mind with that awful thought, and you will be far less able to fumble your responsibility to warn them of their danger.

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