

# THE TRUTH ABOUT MAN

A BIBLICAL STUDY OF THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

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# INTRODUCTION

## METHOD OF STUDY

The great goal of this study is for the student to have an encounter with God through His Word. Founded upon the conviction that the Scriptures are the inspired and infallible Word of God, this study has been designed in such a way that it is literally impossible for the student to advance without an open Bible before him or her. Our goal is to obey the exhortation of the apostle Paul in II Timothy 2:15: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.”

Each lesson deals with a specific theme regarding the doctrine of man. The student will complete each lesson by answering the questions according to the Scriptures given. The student is encouraged to meditate upon each text and write his or her thoughts. The benefit reaped from this study will depend upon the student’s investment. If the student answers the questions by thoughtlessly copying the text and without seeking to understand its meaning, very little will be gained.

The student will find that this is primarily a Biblical study and does not contain much in the way of colorful illustrations, quaint stories, or even theological commentaries. It was our desire to provide a work that only pointed the way to the Scriptures and allowed the Scriptures to speak for themselves.

This book may be used by an individual, small group, or Sunday school class. It is highly recommended that the student complete each chapter on his or her own before meeting for discussion and questions with the group or discipleship leader.

## EXHORTATION TO THE STUDENT

The student is encouraged to study Biblical doctrine and discover its exalted place in the Christian life. The true Christian cannot bear or even survive a divorce between the emotions and the intellect, or between devotion to God and the doctrine of God. According to the Scriptures, neither our emotions nor our experiences provide an adequate foundation for the Christian life. Only the truths of Scripture, understood with the mind and communicated through doctrine, can provide that sure foundation upon which we should establish our beliefs and behavior and determine the validity of our emotions and experiences. The mind is not the enemy of the heart, and doctrine is not an obstacle to devotion. The two are indispensable and should be inseparable. The Scriptures command us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our mind (Matthew 22:37), and to worship God in both spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

The study of doctrine is both an intellectual and devotional discipline. It is a passionate search for God’s truth that should always lead to greater personal transformation, obedience, and heartfelt worship. Therefore, the student should be on guard against the great error of seeking only impersonal knowledge, and not the person of God. Neither mindless devotion nor mere intellectual pursuits are profitable, for in either case, God is not honored.

## THE NEW AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION

To complete this study the New American Standard Version is required. This version of Scripture was chosen for the following reasons: (1) The unwavering conviction of the translators that the Bible is the infallible Word of God; and (2) its faithfulness to the original languages.

# Lesson One

## *The Creation of Man*

The Scriptures teach us that man is not an accident or the result of some mindless process, but the creative work of the eternal God. After God had created all other creatures, He formed the first man Adam from the dust of the ground, breathed the breath of life into his nostrils and he became a living being. From Adam, God then formed the woman Eve to be both his companion and helper. They were commanded to multiply and fill the earth that had been placed under their dominion. All mankind finds its common ancestry in this union of Adam and Eve.

The Scripture is clear that both man and woman were created *by* God and *for* God, and find meaning for their existence only in loving Him, glorifying Him, and doing His will. Unique among all other creatures, only they were created in the *imago dei* or image of God and granted the privilege of living in personal and unbroken fellowship with Him.

These truths are of great importance for us in that they define who we are and the purpose for which we were made. We are not the authors of our own existence, but we were brought into existence by the gracious will and power of God. We do not belong to ourselves, but to God who made us for His own purposes and good pleasure. To seek to separate from God is to sever ourselves from life. To live independently of His person and will, is to deny the purpose for which we were made.

1. In the second chapter of Genesis is found Scripture's account of the creation of man. Based on Genesis 2:7, summarize this account. What does it communicate to us about the origin of man and his relationship to God?

2. In the second chapter of Genesis is also found Scripture's account of the creation of the first woman Eve. Based on Genesis 2:21-23, summarize the biblical account of woman's creation. What does it communicate to us about her origin and relationship to God?

1. Having established the truth that man is the creative work of God, we must now consider his uniqueness among the rest of creation. According to the following phrases from Genesis 1:26, how is man unique from the rest of creation?

a. *Let us make man...*

**Study Help:** God does not say, “Let there be,” as with the rest of creation (1:3, 6, 14), but “Let us make.” This communicates the idea of greater personal relationship. The phrase “Let us...” has two possible interpretations: (1) It is a plural of majesty. It was common to present royalty as speaking as a plurality. (2) It is a reference to the Trinity. The creation involves the Father, the Spirit (Genesis 1:2) and the Son (John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16).

b. *In our image...*

**Study Help:** God did not say, “after their kind,” as with the rest of creation (1:11-12 21, 24-25), but “in our image.” Humanity is unique among creation in that it alone is said to bear the *imago dei* or image of God. The image of God may refer to the following: *Personality* - Adam and Eve were personal and self-conscious creatures. They were not mere animals driven by instinct or machines programmed to respond to certain stimuli. *Spirituality* - The Scriptures declare that “God is Spirit” (John 4:24), and so it is reasonable to expect to find this same attribute in man who was created in God’s image. Adam and Eve were more than animated clay, they were spiritual, endowed with a genuine capacity to know God, fellowship with God, and respond to God in obedience, adoration, and thanksgiving. *Knowledge* - In Colossians 3:10, the Scriptures describe one aspect of the image of God as having a true knowledge of God. This does not mean that Adam and Eve knew all that can be known about God - a finite creature can never fully comprehend an infinite God. Rather, it means that the knowledge they did possess was pure or unalloyed. *Self-Determination or Will* – Adam and Eve were created with a will, they possessed the power of self-determination, and they were granted the freedom to choose. *Immortality* - Although Adam and Eve were created and therefore had a beginning, and although every moment of their very existence depended upon the kindness of their Creator, they were endowed with an immortal soul - once created, it would never cease to exist. The immortality of the soul should lead all men to consider carefully the awesome responsibility of self-determination. Since the soul is eternal, the choices we make will bear eternal consequences from which there may be no escape.

c. *Let them rule...*

**Study Help:** Man and woman were given the privilege and responsibility of ruling over all creation as vice-regents of God. Their rule was not to be independent of God's, but in perfect conformity to His will. They were to rule for the benefit and care of creation and for the glory of God.

3. In Genesis 1:26-28, we learned that man is unique among the rest of creation in that He alone was created in the image of God. In the following Scriptures, we will discover that, although man is unique, He shares a common purpose with the rest of creation - He was not made for himself, but for the glory and good pleasure of God. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Psalms 104:31

Romans 11:36

Colossians 1:16

4. The Scriptures teach that man and woman were created *by* God and *for* God, and find meaning for their existence only in loving Him, glorifying Him and doing His will. We are not the authors of our own existence, but we were brought into existence by the gracious will and power of God. We do not belong to ourselves, but to God who made us for His own purposes and good pleasure. In light of these great truths, how should mankind respond?

a. *Reverence*: Psalm 33:6-9

b. *Worship*: Psalm 95:6

c. *Service*: Psalm 100:2-4

d. *Love*: Mark 12:30

e. *Glory and Honor*: I Corinthians 10:31



## Lesson Two

# The Fall of Adam

In accordance with His own purpose and good pleasure, God created Adam and Eve and commanded them not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Obedience to the command would lead to a life of joyful fellowship with God and continued dominion over creation. Disobedience to the command would lead to spiritual and physical death and all the accompanying maladies.

Adam and Eve were tempted and disobeyed the command. Because of their disobedience, their fellowship with God was broken and they fell from their original state of righteousness and holiness. These devastating consequences of Adam's disobedience were not limited to him, but resulted in the fall of the entire human race. Although the Scriptures do not remove all mystery surrounding this great truth, they affirm that the sin and guilt of Adam has been imputed or credited to all his descendants, and that all men without exception are now born bearing Adam's fallen nature and exhibiting Adam's hostility toward God.

## The Fall of Adam

After God created Adam in His image, He gave him a simple command: "From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat." A warning followed this prohibition: "In the day that you eat from it you will surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Adam's obedience to God would lead to a continued or even greater state of blessedness. His disobedience would lead to death.

1. In Genesis 2:16-17 are found the commandment and warning given to Adam. Read the text until you are familiar with its contents and then answer the following questions:

- a. *According to verse 16, what privilege did God give to Adam? How does this privilege prove that God cared about Adam and did not disregard his needs?*

- b. *According to verse 17, what prohibition was placed upon Adam? What was Adam commanded not to do?*

c. *According to verse 17, what would be penalty for disobeying God's command?*

2. In Genesis 3:1-6, is found the biblical account of how Adam and Eve were tempted to disobey God's command. Read the text until you are familiar with its contents and then answer the following questions:

a. *In verse 1, the Scriptures declare that a literal serpent tempted Eve. According to Revelation 12:9 and 20:2, who was the one working in and through the serpent?*

b. *According to verse 4-5, what promise did Satan make to Eve?*

3. *According to verse 6, how did Eve and her husband Adam respond to Satan's temptation through the serpent?*

3. In Genesis 3:7-10, is recorded the immediate results of our Adam and Eve's disobedience. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then write your thoughts. What were the results of their disobedience?

1. *Verse 7*

b. *Verses 8-10*

**Study Help:** (a) With one act of disobedience Adam and Eve fell from their original state of righteousness into moral corruption. Their hearts and minds were no longer pure, but became defiled and shameful. The coverings made from fig leaves were a feeble attempt to hide their sin and corruption. (b) Sin always results in fear and separation from God. Sinful man runs from God's holy presence and fears His righteous judgment.

4. Having considered the immediate results of Adam's disobedience, we will now consider the divine judgments that fell upon the serpent, Eve, and Adam. Read Genesis 3:15-24 and then describe these judgments that have affected us all:

a. *The Divine Judgment upon the Serpent (v.14):*

b. *The Divine Judgment upon the Woman (v.16):*

**Study Help:** The phrase, “Your desire will be for your husband” may denote the following: (1) The woman’s relationship with her husband would be marked by longing and lack of fulfillment; (2) The woman who sought independence from God would now have an inordinate desire or craving for man. (3) The relationship between man and woman would be marked by conflict. The woman would “desire” to dominate her husband, and her husband would exert his rule over her.

c. *The Divine Judgment upon the Man (v.17-19):*

5. In the divine judgment upon the serpent in Genesis 3:14-15, is found one of the greatest promises of salvation in the entire Bible (v.15). It has been called the *protevangelium* [Latin: *proto* = first + *evangelium* = gospel]. Write your comments on this text.

**Note:** Jesus Christ is the “seed” or offspring of the woman Mary. On the cross, Satan bruised Christ’s heel (*i.e.* Christ was wounded, but not mortally – He arose from the dead). Through that same cross, Christ bruised Satan on the head (*i.e.* Satan was mortally wounded – he has been forever defeated).

## Important Questions about the Fall

The Scriptural account of the “Fall” provides the only adequate explanation of man’s present fallen state and the evil that surrounds us. It is also upon this dark background that the glories of God’s mercy and grace appear. Only to the degree that we understand the tragedy of Adam and his condemnation, can we comprehend something of the glories of Christ and His Gospel.

In our study of the fall, we are faced with some of the most important and complex theological questions in all of Scripture - the origin of evil, the nature of human freedom, the sovereignty of God, and His eternal purpose. Although what we know about these issues will always be mingled with a certain degree of mystery, it is necessary that we endeavor to know what we can. In the following, we will address the following questions:

- \* How can a Righteous and Holy being Fall?
- \* Did God Ordain the Fall?
- \* What is God’s Eternal Purpose in the fall?

## How Could Adam Fall?

The Scriptures affirm that the fall was not due to any fault in the Creator. All God’s works are perfect (Deuteronomy 32:4), He cannot be tempted by sin (James 1:13), nor does He tempt others with sin (James 1:13). The blame for the fall rests squarely upon the shoulders of Adam. As Ecclesiastes 7:29 declares, “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men *upright*, but they have sought out many devices.”

In the light of this truth is found one of the greatest theological problems in all the Scriptures - How is it possible that a creature created in the image of God came to chose evil and sin? Adam and Eve had a true inclination towards good, and there was nothing corrupt or evil in them to which temptation might appeal. How such righteous beings could chose evil over good, and chose the words of a serpent over the commands of their Creator is beyond human comprehension.

There have been numerous attempts throughout history to explain the fall of Adam, but none of them is without its limitations. We must therefore be content with the simple truth of Scripture that although God made man righteous and holy, he was finite and mutable (*i.e.* subject to change) and capable of making a choice contrary to the will of God.

# Did God Ordain the Fall?

The word “ordain” means to put in order, arrange, or appoint. To ask if God ordained the fall is to ask if He put it in order, arranged it, or appointed that it occur. Other words that carry similar meaning are: “decree,” “predetermine,” and “predestine.” Did God determine beforehand or decree that the fall should occur? The answer to this question is “yes”, but we must be very careful that we understand what this does and does not mean.

God’s ordaining of the fall *does not mean* that He forced Satan to tempt our first parents, or that He coerced them to disregard His command. What God’s creatures did, they did willingly. God is holy, just and good. He is not the author of sin, He does not sin, cannot be tempted by sin, and He does not tempt anyone to sin.

God’s ordaining of the fall *does mean* that it was certain to happen. It was God’s will that Adam be tested, and it was God’s will to let Adam both stand and fall alone without the divine aid which could have kept him from falling. God could have hindered Satan from laying the temptation before Eve, or in the face of such temptation, He could have given Adam special sustaining grace to enable him to triumph over it. From the testimony of Scriptures, we understand that He did not.

Finally, God’s ordaining of the fall *does mean* that it was a part of His eternal plan. Before the foundation of the world, before the creation of Adam and Eve and the serpent that tempted them, before the existence of any garden or tree, God ordained the fall for His glory and the greater good of His creation. He did not merely permit our first parents to be tempted and then wait to react to whatever choice they made. He did not merely look through the corridors of time and see the fall. Rather, the fall was a part of God’s eternal plan and He predetermined or predestined that it should and would happen. The question that immediately arises from such a statement is:

*“Is God the author of sin?”*

This question can and should be answered with a strong negative. God is not the author of sin, nor does He coerce men to sin against Him. Although He predetermined that the fall should and would happen, He also predetermined that it should happen through the willing actions of Satan, Adam, and Eve. Although our finite minds cannot fully comprehend how God can be absolutely sovereign over every event of history and over every individual act without destroying individual freedom, the Scriptures abound with examples that demonstrate this to be true. Joseph was sold into slavery as a result of the willful sin of his brothers and yet when the final story was told, Joseph declared, “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive” (Genesis 50:20). The Son of God was crucified as a result of man’s willful sin and hostility toward God, and yet, God had ordained or predetermined the death of Christ before the foundation of the world (Acts 4:27-28; I Peter 1:20). In the Scriptures we read:

*“This Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death” (Acts 2:23).*

*“For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur...” (Acts 4:27-28).*

In the Scriptures, we see that God does ordain or predetermine an event to occur and yet brings it to pass

through the willful sin of men without being the author of their sin or coercing them to do that which is against their will. Godless men willfully nailed Jesus Christ to the cross and were responsible for their actions, but the entire event was according to the predetermined plan of God. The fall of Satan and the later fall of the human race through Adam and Eve, were the result of their own sin for which they alone were responsible, and yet the events came to pass according to the ordained, predetermined, predestined plan of God. God has decreed a great eternal purpose for His creation and has ordained every event of history through which that purpose is being fulfilled. Nothing, not even the fall of man or the death of God's Son, occurs apart from the Sovereign decree of God.

*“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.” - Romans 11:33-36*

## What is God's Eternal Purpose in the Fall?

Having demonstrated that the fall was the result of the creature's willful disobedience and yet according to the eternal purpose of God, it is now necessary that we endeavor to know that purpose. In light of the evil and suffering that has resulted from the fall, it may seem difficult to accept that there is any good purpose. Nevertheless, God's decree assures us that there is.

We know from the Scriptures that the creation of the universe, the fall of man, the nation of Israel, the cross of Christ, the Church, and the judgment of the nations have one great and final purpose. It is that the fullness of God's attributes be revealed to His creation and that all creation know Him, glorify Him, and fully enjoy Him as God.

## The Full Revelation of God's Attributes

God created the universe to be a theater upon which He might display the infinite glory of His person and attributes, that He might be fully known, worshipped, and enjoyed by His creation. It has been said by many that the fall of man is the pitch-black sky upon which the stars of God's attributes shine with the greatest intensity of glory. It is only through the fall and the advent of evil that the fullness of God's character may truly be known.

When the Christian worships God, what are the attributes that seem most dear to him? Are they not God's mercy, grace, and unconditional love? Are these not the divine attributes most exalted in all the great hymns of the Church? Yet how could these attributes be known except through the fall of man? Unconditional love can only be manifest upon men who do not meet the conditions. Mercy can only be poured forth from the throne of God upon men who deserve condemnation. Grace can only be granted to men who have done nothing to earn it. Our fallenness is our doing, for which we are obliged to take full responsibility. Yet it is through the dark theater of our fallenness that the grace and mercy of God take center stage and shine forth upon an audience of both men and angels. It is in the salvation of fallen man, that the wisdom, grace, and mercy of God are revealed, not only to man, but to every created being in heaven, earth, and hell (Ephesians 2:7; 3:10).

## The Full Revelation of the Glories of Christ

The greatest work of God is the death and resurrection of the Son of God for the salvation of God's people. However, if man had not fallen there would have been no Calvary and no Savior. The very thing that most explains God (John 1:18), draws us to Him (John 12:32) and causes us to love Him (I John 4:10, 19) would be gone. What would take its place? What other means could have been used to demonstrate the immeasurable mercies of God? Christ crucified is the great theme of every worthy Christian hymn, sermon, conversation, and thought. Without the fall, redemption would be unknown to us. We would be like the angels, longing to look upon something that we would never and could never experience (I Peter 1:12).

It is wrong and near blasphemy to even hint that the cross of Christ was a mere Plan “B” that was employed only because of Adam’s wrong choice in the garden. The cross is the main event to which every other work of God’s providence points. All things stand in its shadow. In one sense, the cross was necessary because of the fall, but in another sense, the fall was necessary so that the glories of God in the cross of Christ might be made fully known.

## The Full Revelation of the Creature’s Dependence

One of the most awe-inspiring and humbling truths about God is that He is absolutely free from any need or dependence. His existence, the fulfillment of His will, and His happiness or good pleasure does not depend upon anyone or anything outside of Himself. He is the only being who is truly self-existent, self-sustaining, self-sufficient, independent, and free. All other beings derive their life and blessedness from God, but all that is necessary for God’s existence and perfect happiness is found in Him.

The existence of the universe requires not only the initial act of creation but also the continued power of God to sustain it. If He were to withdraw His power for even one moment, all would turn to chaos and destruction. This same truth may be applied to the character of moral beings, whether angels or men. Adam in paradise and Satan in heaven, although created righteous and holy, could not stand apart from the sustaining grace of an Almighty God. How much less are we able to stand and how much more quickly would we fall apart from the same sustaining grace. The fall, therefore, provides the greatest example of our constant need for God. If we cannot continue our existence beyond our next breath except for God’s preservation, how much less are we able to maintain any semblance of righteousness before Him apart from His grace?

## *The Fall of Mankind*

The Scriptures affirm three very important truths about the fall of Adam and its devastating effects upon the entire human race. Apart from these truths, it is impossible to account for mankind's moral corruption and the universal presence of evil in a world created good. These three truths are:

1. *God made Adam to be the representative or head of the entire human race.* As head, Adam acted on behalf of all mankind and the consequences of his actions affect us all.

2. *God "imputed" Adam's sin to all men.* The words *impute* and *imputation*, come from the Latin verb *imputare* which means, "to consider, reckon, attribute, or charge to one's account." With regard to the fall, it means that God reckons or charges the sin of Adam to every man's account. All men from birth are regarded and treated as sinners on account of Adam's sin. All men bear the guilt of Adam's sin and its penalty.

3. *God turned all men over to Moral Corruption.* The penalty of Adam's sin was not only death, but also moral corruption – he fell from his original state of righteousness and became a morally corrupt creature. Since all men bear the guilt of Adam's sin they also bear the penalty – death and moral corruption. Every one of Adam's descendants is born wholly inclined to evil and at enmity with God.

## An Undeniable Truth, An Unexplainable Mystery

The fall of mankind in the fall of Adam will always be shrouded in mystery. It is one of the greatest and most essential doctrines in Christianity, it is clearly asserted in Scripture to be true, and it provides the only adequate explanation for the universal moral corruption of mankind. At the same time, the very Scripture that affirms the doctrine, offers little explanation as to how such things can be so, and offers no defense against the frequent accusations that such things are unjust or unfair. How can it be just for God to impute the sin and guilt of Adam to all of mankind? The following points are worthy of consideration:

1. The truthfulness of a doctrine is not validated by our ability to comprehend it or reconcile it to our understanding, nor is our inability grounds for rejecting it. If this were the case, there would be no such thing as Christian doctrine, for there is no revealed truth that does not contain some element of mystery. In Deuteronomy 29:29 the Scriptures declare, "The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." It is the great promise of Scripture that the truth we believe and yet do not fully understand will one day be made known to us and the shadow of uncertainty and doubt that yet remain will disappear in the light of God's full revelation. The apostle Paul writes, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known" (I Corinthians 13:12).

2. Throughout Scripture, God has so proved His perfect justice in His dealings with man, that any and every accusation to the contrary is met with a stern rebuke - "... God is greater than man. Why do you complain against Him that He does not give an account of all His doings?" (Job 33:12b-13). "On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God?" (Romans 9:20). If God has made Adam to be the head of the race and imputed his sin to the whole of mankind, it is both just and fair. God has the divine right to purpose and to work according to His own good pleasure.
  
3. It was a great demonstration of grace that God would allow one man to be tested on behalf of all other men. Adam was the fittest man of the entire human race and lived in a place untainted by the sin and corruption that now prevails. God chose the greatest and noblest among us to stand in our place.
  
4. All the evidence of Scripture, human history and the inner witness of conscience points to the certainty that any one of Adam's race would have done no better than Adam himself.
  
5. All of Adam's race, as soon as they are able, willingly participate in Adam's rebellion against God and so prove that God justly condemns them.
  
6. If it is wrong or unjust for God to condemn the whole human race through the fall of the one man Adam, then it is just as wrong for God to save His people (*i.e.* the redeemed) through the obedience of the one man Jesus Christ. If God cannot rightly impute Adam's sin to mankind, then He cannot rightly impute mankind's sin to Christ, or Christ's righteousness to those who believe.

## All Men are Born in Sin

The declaration that "all men are born in sin" means that God has imputed the sin and guilt of Adam to every one of his descendants. All men from birth are regarded and treated as sinners on account of Adam's sin. It is important to note that this is not some "theological theory" or "philosophical construction", but it is the clear teaching of the Scriptures and is demonstrated constantly in everyday life.

1. In Romans 5:12-19, is found the most important discourse in all of Scripture regarding the fall of Adam and the imputation of his sin to the entire human race. Read the passage until you are familiar with its contents and then explain the meaning of each of the following declarations:

a. *Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered into the world, and death through sin (v.12):*

**Study Help:** *Through one man, sin entered into the world.* The Scriptures affirm that God created all things “good” (Genesis 1:31). The biblical explanation for the presence of sin in God’s good world is that it entered or invaded “through” or “by means of” the disobedience of the one man - Adam. *And death through sin.* Sin entered into the world *through* Adam’s first act of disobedience, and death entered into the world *through* sin - a devastating chain of events. It is extremely important to note that death did not enter into our world as a “natural consequence” of sin, but as the divine penalty for sin. Death is the punishment or wages of sin (Genesis 2:17; Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23).

b. *And so death spread to all men, because all sinned (v.12):*

**Study Help:** *So death spread to all men.* Having explained how death entered into God’s world, Paul affirms what we all know to be true - death has spread to all men. All life inevitably leads to death. Men are born to die. *Because all sinned.* Paul’s explanation for the spread of death to all men is brief, but powerful. Death is the penalty or wage of sin (Roman 6:23) and death has spread to all men, because “all sinned.” The word “sinned” is written in the aorist tense, which is most commonly used to describe a momentary action in past time or a single event in history. In this case, the historic event to which Paul is referring is the sin and fall of Adam. According to the grammar and the context (*i.e.* the following verses), this phrase does not mean that death has spread to all men because all men personally “sin” or “have sinned,” but that death has spread to all men because “all sinned” in that historic moment in the garden when Adam sinned. Through Adam’s sin, all were “constituted sinners” (v.19). For this reason, the penalty of death has spread to all men, even to infants and the like who die without having committed sin personally.

3. *For until the Law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam to Moses even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam (v.13-14):*

**Study Help:** These verses are given as proof of the fact that all are “made sinners” in Adam. The logic is very clear: (1) According to the Scriptures (Romans 6:23), death is the wage of sin or the penalty for breaking God’s law. Only sinners or lawbreakers die. (2) Yet countless people died before the Law of Moses was ever given and countless infants have died in the womb even though they never personally sinned or broke God’s law. (3) The death of those who have never personally sinned in the “likeness of the offense of Adam” can only be explained by the fact that the sin of Adam has been imputed to them, and they are accounted “sinners” in Adam.

d. *By the transgression of the one the many died (v.15):*

**Study Help:** The “many” is a reference to the great mass of humanity descended from Adam. Again, Paul is showing that the death experienced by all men is the result of the sin of one man, namely Adam. Through his transgression, the many “sinned” (5:12), and therefore, the “many” died.

e. *Judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation (v.16):*

**Study Help:** The word “judgment” refers to a judicial sentence, decision, or verdict. The word “condemnation” refers to a damnatory sentence or guilty verdict. Adam’s transgression resulted in his judgment. His judgment resulted in his condemnation. The penalty for his crime was death. This condemnation and its penalty has passed on to all men, because “all sinned” in Adam.

f. *By the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one (v.17):*

**Study Help:** Through Adam’s one sin, death came to exercise absolute authority over all men (*i.e.* all men die). This is

true because Adam's sin was imputed to all men and all were constituted "sinners." As sinners, they were all under the divine judgment of death.

*g. Through the one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men (v.18):*

**Study Help:** *Through the one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.* This statement simply summarizes what has already been said in verses 12-17. Through the one transgression of Adam, all men were made sinners (v.12, 19), were condemned (v.16-17), and were made subject to death (v.12, 14, 15, 17).

*j. Through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners (v.19):*

**Study Help:** The word "made" means "to set down as," "declare", or "constitute." As a result of Adam's disobedience, all men are now regarded and treated as sinners. It is important to note that Paul does not say that as the result of Adam's sin the many were made sinful (i.e. born with a sinful nature), which in turn led them to live a life of sin, and come under the condemnation of death. Rather, the many were constituted "sinners" and brought under the punishment of death even

before they had the opportunity to personally sin.

# Man is Born in Corruption

The penalty of Adam's sin was not only death, but also moral corruption – he fell from his original state of righteousness and became a morally corrupt creature. Since all men bear the guilt of Adam's sin they also bear the penalty – death and moral corruption. Every one of Adam's descendants is born under the sentence of death, morally corrupt, and wholly inclined to evil.

It is evident from every individual's experience and the collective experience of all mankind that man's moral corruption is not a learned or imitated behavior, but an inherent trait rooted deeply in the heart. Human history, secular and sacred literature, philosophy, and religion abound with illustrations of man's struggle with his own moral corruption and propensity to evil. The inspired words of the Apostle Paul have been the groan of every man who come to understand the reality of his own moral corruption, "For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate" (Romans 7:15).

One of the most important phrases used by theologians to describe the depth of man's inherited moral corruption or pollution is the phrase "total depravity." The word "depravity" comes from the Latin preposition *de* which communicates intensity and the Latin word *pravus* which means "twisted" or "crooked" To say that something is depraved means that its original state or form has been thoroughly twisted or perverted. To say that man is depraved, means that he has fallen from his original state of righteousness and that his very nature has become thoroughly corrupt. When theologians use the terms "total, pervasive, holistic, or radical depravity" it is important to know what they mean and do not mean:

## *Total Depravity does not mean...*

1. ... that the image of God in man was totally lost in the fall. In Genesis 9:6, I Corinthians 11:7 and James 3:9, the Scripture still refers to man having been "made in the likeness of God," therefore there is a real sense in which the image of God remains in every man.
2. ... that man has no knowledge of the person and will of God. The Scriptures teach us that men know enough of the true God to hate Him, and enough of His truth to reject it and attempt to restrain it (Romans 1:30; 1:18).
3. ... that man does not possess a conscience or that he is totally insensible to good and evil. In Romans 2:15, the Scriptures teach that all men possess a conscience. If not seared (I Timothy 4:2), such a conscience may lead men to admire virtuous character and actions.
4. ... that man is incapable of demonstrating virtue. There are men who love their families, sacrifice their own lives to save others, and perform great acts of generosity and altruism. It is recognized that men are capable of the love of others, civic duty, and even external religious good.

5. ... that all men are as immoral or depraved as they could be, that all men are equally immoral, or that all men indulge in every form of evil that exists. Not all men are delinquents, fornicators, or murderers, but all are capable of such. That which restrains them is the grace of God.

### *Total Depravity does mean...*

(1) ... that the image of God in man has been seriously defaced, or disfigured and that moral corruption has polluted the entire person - body (Romans 6:6,12; 7:24; 8:10,13), reason (Romans 1:21; II Corinthians 3:14 15; 4:4; Ephesians 4:17 19), emotions (Romans 1:26 27; Galatians 5:24; II Timothy 3:2 4), and will (Romans 6:17; 7:14 15).

(2) ... that man is born with a great propensity or inclination towards sin. All men are capable of the greatest evil, the most unspeakable crimes, and the most shameful perversions.

(3) ... that all that men do is contaminated by their own moral corruption. Man's moral corruption and sin pervade his most commendable deeds (Isaiah 64:6).

(4) ... that the deeds of man are not prompted by any love for God or any desire to obey his commands. No man loves God in a worthy manner or as the law commands (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37), nor is there a man who glorifies God in every thought, word, and deed (I Corinthians 10:31; Romans 1:21). All men prefer self to God (II Timothy 3:2-4). All the acts of altruism, heroics, civic duty, and external religious good are prompted by the love of self, but not the love of God.

(5) ... that the mind of man is hostile toward God, cannot subject itself to the will of God, and cannot please God (Romans 8:7 8).

(6) ... that mankind is inclined to greater and greater moral corruption, and this deterioration would be even more rapid than it is if it were not for the grace of God which restrains the evil of men.

(7) ... that man cannot free himself from his sinful and depraved condition. He is spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1 3), morally corrupt (Psalm 51:5), and cannot change himself (Jeremiah 13:23).

Now that we have summarized the meaning of total or radical depravity, we will consider the teaching of Scripture. We will find abundant testimony to what we have learned - Since all men bear the guilt of Adam's sin they also bear the penalty - death and moral corruption. Every one of Adam's descendants is born morally corrupt and wholly inclined to evil.

1. Through a careful study of Genesis 5:1-3, we will clearly see the devastating consequences of the fall and the spread of moral corruption through the human race. Read the text until you are familiar with its content and then answer the following questions:

a. *According to Genesis 5:1, in whose image was Adam made?*

b. *According to Genesis 5:3, in whose likeness were Adam's descendants made? Explain the significance of this truth?*

**Study Help:** Adam was made in the “image of God”, but the descendants of Adam were made in the fallen and depraved image of Adam. It is important to note that men do not inherit Adam's moral corruption in the same way that a son might

inherit a physical trait or deformity from his father. The moral corruption of Adam's descendants is a result of God's judgment against them: Adam sinned and came under the penalty of death and moral corruption. Adam's sin has been imputed to all his descendants and therefore they are subject to the same penalty – death and corruption.

2. Since the fall of Adam, all men are born with a morally corrupt nature that is deprived of good, hostile toward God, and inclined to evil. What do the following Scriptures teach about this truth? How do they demonstrate that man's moral corruption is not a learned behavior, but a reflection of his very nature?

Psalm 51:5

**Study Help:** This does not mean that the sexual relations between David's parents that lead to his birth were sinful. God commanded that men multiply and bring forth children (Genesis 1:28). David is simply putting forth a truth that is defended in the Scriptures and demonstrated in the history of mankind – Man's moral corruption and propensity to evil is not merely a learned behavior, but a part of his very being or nature.

Psalm 58:3

Genesis 8:21

**Study Help:** The word “youth” refers to one’s early life or childhood. There is no need to teach a child to be selfish or self-centered, to lie, manipulate, etc. Such sinful attitudes and deeds spring forth from his very nature.

3. Having established the truth that all men are born bearing the moral corruption of Adam, we will now consider the Scriptures that illustrate the severity or depth of this moral corruption. What do the following Scriptures teach us about the depth and extension of man’s corruption?

Genesis 6:5

**Study Help:** To illustrate the point, suppose that one could place on a video all the thoughts of a man from his earliest moments in childhood to the present day, and then show that film to his closest friends and family, to those with whom he had shared his most intimate thoughts and weaknesses. It would be no exaggeration to say that he would be so overcome with shame that he would never be able to face them again.

Job 15:14-16

Job 25:4-6

Ecclesiastes 9:3

Isaiah 64:6

**Study Help:** The greatest, most commendable deeds of men are nothing but a few filthy rags before God. One might clothe a leper in the finest, white silk to cover his sores, but immediately, the corruption of his flesh would bleed through the garment, leaving it as vile as the man it seeks to hide. So are the “good works” of men before God. They bear the corruption of the man who does them.

4. When speaking about the moral corruption of man, special attention must be given to the heart. In the Scriptures, the heart refers to the seat of the will and the emotions. It represents the very core of one’s being. According to the Scriptures, the very heart of man is corrupt and from it flows every form of sin, rebellion, and perversity. Answer the following questions to complete the exercise:

a. *How is the heart of man described in Jeremiah 17:9?*

b. *According to Matthew 15:19-20 and Mark 7:20-23, how does the corrupt heart of man affect all that a man is and does?*

5. To conclude this part of our study on the moral corruption of man, we will consider a brief, but powerful statement made by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 7:11. What is this statement and how does it demonstrate Christ’s strong belief in the moral depravity of man?

*“If you then, being E \_\_\_\_\_, ...*

6. Based upon the Scriptures we have studied in questions 1-5, summarize what you have learned about man’s moral corruption:





## Lesson Four

### *Spiritual Death*

### *and Moral Inability*

## The Meaning of Spiritual Death

An important phrase used by theologians to describe the depth of man's moral corruption is "Spiritual Death." According to the Scriptures, the divine judgment that fell upon Adam not only resulted in his physical death, but also his spiritual death. He became responsive to every sort of wicked stimuli both human and demonic, but unresponsive to the person and will of God.

The Scriptures teach us that this aspect of the divine judgment that fell upon Adam was not limited to him alone, but includes the entire race of humanity. Every human being is born into this world as a spiritual stillborn, void of true spiritual life toward God and unresponsive to the person and will of God. In order for fallen man to respond to God in love and obedience, a spiritual resurrection must occur through the supernatural working of God's grace and power.

1. In Genesis 2:17, Adam received a warning from God about the dreadful consequence of disobedience. According to this text what would occur the day that Adam violated God's command? What does this text teach us about the spiritual death that Adam incurred as the result of his sin?

**Study Help:** The penalty for Adam's sin was death (Romans 6:23). This death was not only physical, but also spiritual. He became responsive to every sort of wicked stimuli both human and demonic, but unresponsive to the person and will of God.

2. The Scriptures teach us that the divine judgment of spiritual death that fell upon Adam was not limited to him alone, but includes the entire human race. Every person is born into this world as a spiritual stillborn, void of true spiritual life and unresponsive to the person and will of God. In Ephesians 2:1-3, is found one of Scripture's most revealing descriptions of the spiritual death of fallen man. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents. Afterwards, explain in your own words the meaning of each verse:

a. *You were dead in your trespasses and sins (v.1).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, every person is spiritually dead. The Scripture sees this spiritual death as a result of “our sins” - the sin imputed to us “in Adam” (Romans 5:12), and that sin which we ourselves practice (v.2).

b. *In which you formerly walked according to the course of this world (v.2).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, every person “walks in” or “practices” sin as a style of life. They do not walk according to the will of God, but according to the way of a fallen world that is hostile toward God and disobedient.

c. *According to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience (v.2).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, not only does every person walk in the ways of a fallen humanity, but also, they live in a way that conforms to the will of the devil. This is a frightening truth!

d. *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind (v.3).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, every person without exception is driven, or led about by the lusts of their flesh (*i.e.* the wicked desires of their fallen humanity that is hostile toward God and rebellious). They indulge their wicked desires and thoughts.

e. *And were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest (v.3).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, God's wrath abides upon a person (John 3:36). It is important to understand that the wrath of God is not directed towards a person simply because of what they do, but also because of what they are. Man's fallen and evil nature evokes the wrath of God.

3. In Ephesians 4:17-18, is found still another important description of the spiritual death that abides in the heart of every man prior to conversion. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents. Afterwards, explain the meaning of each of the following truths:

a. *[Fallen men] walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding (v.17-18).*

**Study Help:** The “mind” of the spiritually dead may be able to accomplish great endeavors in science, architecture, literature, etc., but with regard to God, it is empty of truth and filled with all sorts of vanities, heresies, and logical inconsistencies. When fallen men seek to be “spiritual” or “religious” the results are catastrophic, even absurd.

b. *Excluded from the life of God (v.18).*

c. *Because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart (v.18).*

**Study Help:** It is important to understand that man is not a victim who is separated from God because of some unavoidable ignorance that he cannot help. Man's ignorance is self-imposed. He is hostile towards God and does not want to know Him or His will. Man is ignorant of spiritual things because he closes his eyes and refuses to look at God. He covers his ears and refuses to listen.

d. *Having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness (v.19).*

**Study Help:** In hardening his heart against God, fallen man becomes callous to all spiritual truth and virtue. He then voluntarily gives himself over to the very evil that God opposes.

4. In the Scriptures, there are several descriptions of fallen man's spiritual death that illustrate what it means to be "spiritually dead." Complete each declaration by filling in the blank and then explain its meaning:

a. *Fallen men are D\_\_\_\_\_ even while they L\_\_\_\_\_ (I Timothy 5:6).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, man is a spiritual corpse - physically alive, but spiritually dead. He is dead to the reality of God and His will.

b. *Fallen men have a name that they are A \_\_\_\_\_, but they are D \_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 3:1).*

**Study Help:** Prior to conversion, a man may appear very religious and even God fearing, but all his works are external and motivated by self-love. In his heart, he does not love God, nor does he seek God's glory.

c. *Fallen men have hearts of S \_\_\_\_\_ (Ezekiel 11:19).*

**Study Help:** A statue of stone is inanimate and is unresponsive to any sort of stimulus. One can pinch, poke, or prod a statue and yet it will not respond. In the same way, the heart of fallen man will not respond to divine stimuli. It is as dead as a stone to God.

d. Fallen men are like A \_\_\_\_\_ trees without F \_\_\_\_\_, D \_\_\_\_\_

dead, U \_\_\_\_\_ (Jude 1:12).

**Study Help:** It would be difficult to find a more graphic illustration of man's spiritual deadness. Prior to conversion, there is no spiritual life in a man.

e. Fallen men perform religious duties and rituals that God considers to be D \_\_\_\_\_ works (Hebrews 6:1; 9:14).

**Study Help:** Again, prior to conversion, a man may appear very religious, but all his works are external and motivated by

self-love. He is as fruitless as a dead tree.

## The Meaning of Moral Inability

Moral inability is another term that is commonly employed by Bible students to describe the extent of man's moral corruption or radical depravity. This doctrine teaches us that fallen man is *unable* to love, obey, or please God.

Upon hearing of such a doctrine, one may ask, "How is man responsible before God if he is *unable* to do anything that God commands? The answer is very important. If man did not love or obey God because he lacked the mental faculties to do so or was somehow physically restrained then it would indeed be unfair for God to hold him accountable. He would be a victim. However, this is not the case with man. His inability is moral and stems from his hostility toward God. Man is *unable* to love God because he *hates* God. He is *unable* to obey God because He *disdains* His commands. He is *unable* to please God because he *does not hold the glory and good pleasure of God to be a worthy goal*. Man is not a victim, but a culprit. He *cannot*, because he *will not*. His corruption and enmity toward God are so great that he would rather suffer eternal perdition than acknowledge God to be God and submit to His sovereignty. For this reason, *Moral Inability* may also be called *Willing Hostility*. A wonderful example of "moral inability" or "willing hostility" is found in Genesis 37:4:

"His [i.e. Joseph's] brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they *hated him* and *could not* speak to him on friendly terms."

Joseph's brothers could not speak to him on friendly terms. It is not because they lacked the physical ability to speak (i.e. they were not mute), but because their hatred was so great toward him that they were unwilling to be friendly to him. In the same way, fallen man's hostility toward God is so great he cannot bring himself to submit to God.

## The Bondage of the Will

Man's will is an expression of his nature. If man possessed a morally pure nature, then his will would be inclined to doing acts that were morally pure. If man were holy and righteous, he would love a holy and righteous God, and he would love and obey His commands. However, fallen man possesses a morally corrupt nature, and so his will is inclined to doing acts that are morally corrupt. Fallen man is unholy and unrighteous, and therefore, he hates a holy and righteous God, fights against His truth, and refuses to submit to His commands. Here we find the answer to the often-debated question:

*Does man possess a free will?*

The Scriptural answer is that man is "free" to choose as he pleases, but because his very nature is morally depraved, it pleases him to turn away from the good and choose evil, to hate truth and believe a lie, to deny God and fight against His will. In one sense, fallen man does have a "free will," but he does not have a "good will." Therefore, he will always "freely" choose in opposition to the person and will of God. Man cannot escape what he is. He is by nature evil, and the works of evil he does "willfully" and "freely."

1. In Matthew 7:16-20, is found an excellent illustration of the truth described above - man's will is an expression of his nature. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then explain the meaning of each phrase.

a. *You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? (v.16).*

**Study Help:** We identify the nature of a tree by the fruit that it bears. In the same way, the true nature or character of a man is revealed, not by what he confesses, but by what he does.

b. *So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit (v.17).*

**Study Help:** There is a direct and undeniable relationship between the nature of a tree and the fruit that it bears. The same is true of a man's nature and his works. A corrupt nature can only produce corrupt works.

c. *A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit (v.18).*

d. *Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire (v.19).*

e. *So then, you will know them by their fruits (v.20).*

2. In Matthew 12:34-35, is found still another excellent illustration of fallen man's moral inability. Read the text several times until

you are familiar with its contents and then explain the meaning of each of the following phrases.

a. *You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good (v.34)?*

**Study Help:** One would be hard pressed to find a greater example of moral inability than that which is found here in the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ.

b. *For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart (v.34).*

**Study Help:** In the Scriptures, there is always a direct relationship between a man's heart or nature, and his words and works. Man wills, speaks, and acts in accordance with his nature.

c. *The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil (v.35).*

## Fallen Man “Cannot Love” God

Most, even the irreligious, claim some degree of love or affection toward God, and very rarely would we ever encounter an individual so bold as to confess their “hatred” toward Him. Nevertheless, the Scriptures testify that fallen man “cannot” love God. In fact, all of Adam’s race “hates” God and lives at war against Him. Most who claim a genuine love for God, know very little about His attributes and works as they are revealed in the Scripture, and therefore the “god” they love is nothing more than a figment of their imagination. They have made a “god” in their own image and they love what they have made. As God declares in Psalm 50:21, “You thought that I was just like you; I will reprove you...”

If fallen men who claim to love God were to investigate the Scriptures, they would most certainly find a God much different than the object of their affections. If they went on to study the attributes of God, such as holiness, justice, sovereignty, and wrath, they would most likely respond in disgust and declare, “My God’s not like that!” or “I could never love a God like that!” We would quickly see that when fallen man is confronted with the true God of the Scriptures, his only reaction is hatred and hostility! What is the reason for this adverse reaction? Again, it has to do with who man is at the very core of his being. If man were by nature holy and righteous, then he could easily love a holy and righteous God and would joyfully submit to His laws. However, man is by nature depraved and corrupt, and therefore he cannot!

1. In the Scriptures, a name has great significance and communicates something about the person who bears it. What names are attributed to fallen man in the following Scriptures? What do they communicate to us about his moral corruption and hostility toward God?

a. *H\_\_\_\_\_ of God (Romans 1:30).*

b. E \_\_\_\_\_ of God (Romans 5:10).

2. Why would any rational creature hate the very God who brought it into existence and selflessly sustained it? Why does fallen man hate God and live at enmity against Him? What do the Scriptures tell us in the following passages? Match the truth with the Scripture by placing the correct letter in each blank.

\_\_\_\_\_ Romans 8:7 a. Fallen man hates God because he loves evil and is engaged in evil deeds. He does not come to God for fear that his evil deeds might be exposed.

\_\_\_\_\_ John 3:19-20; Colossians 1:21 b. Fallen man hates God because he loves sinful pleasures rather than God.

\_\_\_\_\_ II Timothy 3:4 c. Fallen man hates God because his mind is depraved and set on the flesh [i.e. it is morally corrupt and strongly desires the very things that a holy and righteous God opposes].

## Fallen Man “Cannot Know” the Things of God

Through God’s gracious providence, the human race has gained great intellectual achievements in science, technology, medicine, etc. Nevertheless, fallen man’s knowledge of God is nothing more than a twisted maze of heresy and futile thinking. This ignorance is not the result of a “hidden God,” but of a “hiding man.” God has clearly revealed Himself to men through creation, His sovereign works in history, the Scriptures, and finally through His incarnate Son. Man, being spiritually dead and morally corrupt, has responded to this revelation by closing his eyes and covering his ears. He “cannot” know the truth, because He hates the truth, and seeks to repress it. He hates the truth because it is God’s truth, and it speaks against him. Therefore, he cannot bear it.

1. According to I Corinthians 2:14, can fallen man understand the things of God taught by the Holy Spirit? Explain your answer:

2. In the first part of our study on moral inability, we learned that man cannot love God because of his hostility toward Him. Now we will see that Man's hostility towards God is also reflected in his opposition to God's truth. It is important to understand that men are not helpless victims who genuinely desire spiritual truth, but cannot obtain it. Rather, they hate the truth and do all that is in their power to deny and repress it. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Job 21:14-15

Romans 1:18

**Study Help:** The word “suppress” comes from a Greek word that may also be translated, “to restrain, hinder, detain, or hold back.”

3. In Romans 1:21-32, we find an important description of humanity’s hostility toward God and His truth. It demonstrates that fallen man is not a victim who desires the truth of God, but does not have the faculties to know it, but rather he is “hater of the truth” who does not want to know it. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents. Afterwards, explain the following verses:

a. *For even though men knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks (v.21).*

b. *But they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened (v.21).*

c. *Professing to be wise, they became fools (v.22).*

d. *And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (v.23).*

e. *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie (v.25).*

f. *And worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator (v.25). Who is blessed forever. Amen (v.25).*

## Fallen Man “Cannot Obey or Please” God

There is one great common denominator between those religions outside of Christianity - they all believe that a right standing with God is based upon obedience, personal merit, or some ability to please God. Christianity stands alone in declaring that man is hopelessly and helplessly lost. He “cannot improve” his standing before God, he “cannot obey” God, and he “cannot please” God. If he is to be saved, God alone must save him. It is this one truth that fallen man hates most of all, for it requires him to humble himself before God, acknowledge his sin, and ask for mercy!

1. In Romans 8:7-8, is one of the Scripture’s most important descriptions of man’s moral inability. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then explain the meaning of each phrase. What does each phrase teach us about man’s inability to obey or please God:

a. *Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God (v.7)*

**Study Help:** The “mind set on the flesh” refers to the mind of fallen man who is still in an unconverted state, unregenerate, and without Christ.

b. *For it does not subject itself to the law of God (v.7).*

3. *For it is not even able to do so (v.7)*

e. *And those who are in the flesh cannot please God (v.8).*

# Fallen Man “Cannot Seek” God

We live in a world full of self-proclaimed “seekers after God” and yet the Scriptures destroy all such boasting with one simple declaration - *There is none who seeks for God*. Quite often we hear young converts to Christianity who begin their testimony with the words, “For years I was seeking after God,” but the Scriptures again reply - *There is none who seeks for God*. Man is an utterly fallen creature, whose nature is depraved and perverse. He hates a holy God and opposes His truth because it convicts him of his depravity and rebellion. He will not come to God, but will do absolutely everything in his power to escape Him and forget Him. God is righteous and man is a lawbreaker, therefore he is no more inclined to seek God than a criminal at large is inclined to seek an officer of the law.

1. Often we hear men claim to be “seekers of the truth” or “seekers of God,” but how does Scripture respond to such claims?

a. *According to Romans 1:18, does fallen man sincerely seek the truth?*

b. *According to Romans 3:11 does fallen man sincerely seek God?*

2. We have learned that fallen man will not seek God. Why does man have such an aversion to God? Why will fallen man not seek Him? What does John 3:19-20 teach us?

3. The Scriptures teach us that fallen man “will not” and “cannot” seek God. According to the teachings of Jesus in John 6:44 and John 6:65, what must happen before a man can seek God and His salvation?

## Fallen Man “Cannot Change or Reform” Himself

The twentieth century began with great optimism about man’s ability to evolve into a greater, nobler creature. It was supposed to be the age of reform, but it ended in a stupor of despair and confusion. The Scriptures clearly teach that man is born spiritually dead and morally depraved. Any and every human effort at reformation is hopeless. Any and every attempt to make oneself pleasing or acceptable to God will end in utter failure. Man has only one hope – the mercy and grace of God.

1. Having established man’s inability to love, obey, or please God, we will now consider what the Scriptures teach about man’s inability to change, reform himself, or make himself right before God. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Job 9:29-31

Job 14:4

Jeremiah 2:22

Jeremiah 13:23

## Lesson Five

### *Enslavement to Satan*

Before we go on to study the character and universality of sin, it is important that we consider fallen man's relationship to Satan. We will see that fallen man is not only alienated from God, but also united to Satan in his hostility and rebellion against God.

In the beginning, Adam was free to obey God and exercise dominion over all the earth. As a result of His rebellion against God, both he and his race fell into corruption and slavery. Since the fall, every son and daughter of Adam is born in bondage to sin and in slavery to Satan. Although few men would ever regard themselves to be "followers" of the devil, the Scripture testifies that all are born under his dominion, and held captive by him to do his will. Although it is proper to use the term "enslavement" we must understand that man is not a victim held against his will. Fallen man has rejected the rule of God and given himself over to the rule of Satan.

# The Rule of Satan

We must be very careful whenever we speak about the rule and power of Satan. God and the devil are NOT equal powers locked in some cosmic struggle to win the universe. The devil is a finite creature, whom God created, and over whom God rules with absolute sovereignty. Although Satan's rebellion against God is his own doing, it has been ordained and permitted by God for God's purposes and glory.

Without denying or diminishing the truth of God's absolute sovereignty, we can say that there is a very real sense in which this present fallen world and its fallen inhabitants lie in the power of the Evil One. To this truth, the Scriptures bear abundant witness.

1. In Luke 4:5-6, Satan makes a declaration about himself and his relationship to this fallen world. What does he declare and what does it mean?

**Study Help:** It is important to note two things: First, Jesus did not contest the devil's claim. There is a real sense in which Satan has dominion in this world. Secondly, the domain of which the devil boasted had been "handed over" to him. The devil's rule is both permitted and limited by God.

2. It is important to understand that Satan's declaration in Luke 4:6 is no idle boast. What does I John 5:19 teach us about this truth?

**Study Help:** The Scripture declares that this fallen world and its fallen inhabitants are held firmly in the devil's grip. Fallen man seeks his independence from God, and unwittingly makes himself a slave to Satan. This is a frightening truth.

3. In the Scriptures, a name is important in that it often communicates something about the person who bears it. What are the names or titles given to Satan in the following Scriptures?

a. *The R\_\_\_\_\_ of this W\_\_\_\_\_ (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11).* God is the absolute Sovereign over all things, and yet there is a real sense in which dominion has been given to Satan to rule over this fallen world. With such a ruler, is there any wonder why this present age is filled with such evil and fallen man suffers such misery?

b. *The G\_\_\_\_\_ of this W\_\_\_\_\_ (II Corinthians 4:4).* It is the sure testimony of Scripture that there is only one True God. Here, Satan is referred to as the "god of this world" only in the sense that he is working with power in this present evil age, and fallen men have made him their "god" and live according to his will.

c. *The P\_\_\_\_\_ of the P\_\_\_\_\_ of the A\_\_\_\_\_ (Ephesians 2:2).* Satan is a spirit and unhindered by the material restraints of man. His power and authority go far beyond any "earthbound" prince.

## Satan and Fallen Man

Both Satan and men are fallen creatures and there is great affinity between them (*i.e.* they have much in common). They are alike in their moral corruption and in their enmity against God. Although it is repulsive to most, it is nevertheless true: There is such a moral likeness between fallen man and Satan that prior to conversion, all men are not only subjects, but also children of the devil.

1. We have learned from our study of the Scriptures that Satan is described as both a ruler and a god over Adam's fallen race, and he works effectively among them. According to the following Scriptures, how is fallen man described? Fill in the blank and then write your thoughts.

a. *Fallen man is a C\_\_\_\_\_ of the D\_\_\_\_\_ (I John 3:8, 10; John 8:44).*

**Study Help:** The Scriptures deny the universal fatherhood of God, but divides Adam's race into two categories: The children of the devil are those who refuse God's offer of mercy and remain in their rebellion. They show themselves to be children of the devil in that they practice the sinful works of the devil. The children of God are those who receive God's forgiveness and the adoption of sons through the atoning death of Jesus Christ. They show themselves to be the children of God in that they practice the righteous works of their heavenly Father.

b. *Fallen man lives under the D\_\_\_\_\_ of S\_\_\_\_\_ (Acts 26:18; see also Colossians 1:13).*

**Study Help:** The word "dominion" refers to the power, authority, or jurisdiction of Satan. To live under Satan's dominion is to live under his rule or government.

c. *Fallen man lives A\_\_\_\_\_ to the P\_\_\_\_\_ of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:2).*

e. Fallen man is caught in the S\_\_\_\_\_ of the D\_\_\_\_\_ (II Timothy 2:26).

**Study Help:** A snare or noose was type of trap used in ancient times to catch birds and other animals. It was a hidden device that would entangle an animal unexpectedly and suddenly. It serves as an excellent illustration of Satan's deadly work.

6. Fallen man is held C\_\_\_\_\_ to do the devil's W\_\_\_\_\_ (II Timothy 2:26).

**Study Help:** Satan captures men in order to enslave them and use them to carry out his will in this fallen world.

2. We have learned from our study of the Scriptures that Satan is described as both a ruler and a god over Adam's fallen race. According to the following Scriptures, how does he work among fallen man? How is it that he makes them his subjects and enslaves them to do his will?

a. Satan masks his true identity (II Corinthians 11:14-15).

b. *Satan lies (John 8:44) and deceives (Revelation 12:9).*

c. *Satan blinds fallen man to the truth (II Corinthians 4:4)*

d. *Satan tempts (Matthew 4:3; I Thessalonians 3:5).*

## Lesson Six

## *The Character*

## *and Universality of Sin*

# The Sinfulness of Sin

To begin our study of man's personal participation in Adam's rebellion, we must have a correct understanding of the nature or character of sin. Therefore it is necessary that we study the many attributes and manifestations of sin as they are revealed in the Scriptures. In doing so, we will discover that sin is much more than an error in moral judgment, even much more than disobedience to some impersonal law. Sin is a crime against the person of God. In our study we must do more than simply define terms. We must regain a biblical understanding of the *sinfulness of sin*. We live in a world and worship in churches that, for the most part, no longer understand the heinous nature of sin and so we must endeavor to rediscover what has been lost. Our understanding of God and of the greatness of our Salvation in Christ depends upon it.

## Sin is Always against God

Sin is always first and foremost a sin against God and an affront to His person. To disobey a divine command is to clench the fist and wag it in the face the One who gives life to all and rules over all. Today, if people speak of sin at all, they speak of sin against man, or sin against society, or even sin against nature, but rarely do we hear of sin against God. A person is thought to be good, because they have good relations with their fellowman, even though they live in total disregard for God and His will. It is often asked how God can judge an atheist, who is a good man, and yet we are blind to the fact that any man who denies His Creator and renders nothing to the One who gives him all things cannot be good. The Scriptures record that King David lied to his people, committed adultery, and even orchestrated the murdered of an innocent man. And yet when confronted with his sins, he cried out to God, "Against You, You only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Your sight" (Psalm 51:4). David knew that all sin is first and foremost sin against God. Until one understands this truth, they can never understand the heinous nature of sin.

## Sin is Failure to Love God

The greatest of all sins is the violation of the greatest of all commands: "And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength" (Mark 12:30). Christ declared, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments (John 14:15), therefore, all disobedience is a demonstration of our lack of love toward God. For this reason, when the apostle Paul sought to prove the depravity of mankind in the first three chapters of the book of Romans, he referred to Adam's race as "haters of God" (Romans 1:30). No greater indictment could be made against fallen man. Not loving God is at the very heart of all rebellion. It should also be noted that a man might be very religious and conscientious of divine law and duty, and yet be a terrible sinner before God, if his obedience is prompted by anything other than love for God.

## Sin is Failure to Glorify God

The Scriptures declare that man was created for the glory of God and that all that man does, even the most menial tasks of eating and drinking should be done for God's glory (I Corinthians 10:31). For man to glorify God is for him to esteem the supremacy and worth of God above all things, to take joy in God and be satisfied in Him above all things, and to live before God with the reverence, gratitude, and worship that is due Him. Sin is the very opposite of glorifying God. When man sins he becomes the opposite of what he was created to be. A sinful man is a creature who has dislocated himself and perverted the very reason for his existence. He has replaced God with self and God's will with self-determination. Paul the apostle writes, "When they knew God, they glorified him not as God," and "They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1:21, 25). Sin's roots go much deeper than what is seen on the surface. It is man's refusal to acknowledge God's right as God. It is man's determination to set himself above his Creator, usurp His throne, and steal His glory. Sin is fundamentally a refusal to glorify God as God, and it manifests itself anytime that man seeks his own glory above God's.

# Sin is Godless and Ungodly

The word *godlessness* denotes a refusal to acknowledge God as God, a desire to live a “godless” existence, free from His sovereignty and law. The word *ungodliness* denotes a refusal to be conformed to the character and will of God, a desire for moral depravity rather than likeness to God. It has been said that the greatest compliment that may be paid to another person is to desire to be “with” them and be “like” them. Sin reveals an inward desire to live “without” God and to be “unlike” God. This is a great affront to God!

# Sin is Rebellion and Insubordination

In I Samuel 15:23 the Scriptures declare: “For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and insubordination is as iniquity and idolatry...” The word “rebellion” is translated from the Hebrew word *meri*, which means to be contentious, rebellious, or disobedient towards. The word “insubordination” is translated from the Hebrew word *patsar*, which literally means “to press or push.” It denotes one that is pushy, insolent, arrogant, and presumptuous. There are no small sins, because all sin is rebellion and insubordination. To practice any form of rebellion is as evil as partaking in some pagan or demonic ritual. To practice any form of insubordination is as evil as partaking in gross iniquity or rendering worship to a false god.

# Sin is Lawlessness

In I John 3:4, the Scriptures declare, “Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” The word “lawlessness” is translated from the Greek word *anomía* [*a* = without, no + *nómos* = law]. To practice “lawlessness” is to live “without law” or as though God had never revealed His will to mankind. A person may “practice lawlessness” by openly defying the rule and law of God, or by simply being unconcerned and willingly ignorant. In either case, the person is showing contempt for God and His Law. The abominable nature of “practicing lawlessness” is seen in the fact that the antichrist is referred to as the “man of lawlessness” (II Thessalonians 2:3).

# Sin is Treachery

The word “treachery” denotes a deceitful and unfaithful act against another. Throughout the Scriptures, treachery is seen as being an aspect found in all sin (Ezekiel 18:24), in rebellion (Isaiah 48:8), in forsaking the true God for idols (I Chronicles 5:25), and in any form of apostasy or turning away from God (Psalm 78:57). All sin a betrayal of the One who created us and lovingly sustains our lives.

# Sin is an Abomination

If only one thing could be said about sin, it should be said that above all things sin is an abomination to God. An abomination before the Lord is a foul, disgusting, abominable thing. It is detestable and loathsome to God and an object of His hatred (Proverbs 6:16). In the Scriptures, all sin is an abomination and to sin is to act abominably (Ezekiel 16:52). Proverbs 28:9 declares that “He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination,” and Proverbs 15:8-9 declares that the lifestyle and sacrifice of the wicked are an abomination. All idolatry (Deuteronomy 7:25) and any unjust act (Deuteronomy 25:16) is an abomination before the Lord, as well as any person who is devious (Proverbs 3:32; 15:26), a liar (Proverbs 12:22), perverse in heart (Proverbs 11:20), or proud in heart (Proverbs 16:5). In Revelation 21:8, 27, the Scriptures conclude with the warning that the abominable and those who practice abominations will suffer eternal punishment.

## Sin is Missing the Mark

The most common Hebrew word for sin is *chata*, which means to miss the mark, miss the way, or go wrong. In Judges 20:16, we read that the men of Benjamin could “sling a stone at a hair and not miss [*chata*], and in Proverbs 19:2, we read, “He who hurries his footsteps errs or misses the way [*chata*]. In the New Testament, the most common Greek word for sin is *hamartáno*, which may also be translated to miss the mark, err, be mistaken, or wander from the path. According to the Scriptures, the mark or goal toward which man is to aim is the glory of God. Any thought, word or deed that does not have the glory of God as its chief end is sin. It is important to note that sin [*chata* or *hamartáno*] is never seen as an innocent mistake or honest error, rather it is always a willful act of disobedience resulting from man’s moral corruption and rebellion against God.

## Sin is Trespassing the Boundary

The word “transgress” is translated from the Hebrew word *abar* which means to cross or pass over, to pass through, or to by pass. To transgress God’s command is to go beyond what is permitted by God’s commands. It is to ignore the restrictions imposed upon us by God’s law and to run beyond its fence. In the New Testament, the word “transgress” is translated from the Greek word *parabáino*, which means to go by the side of, to go passed, to pass over, or to step over. In Matthew 15:2-3 is found an excellent example of *parabáino*: The Pharisees asked Jesus, “Why do your disciples break [*parabáino*] the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.” And Jesus answered them, “Why do you yourselves transgress [*parabáino*] the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?”

## The Universality of Sin

Now that we have seen something of the *sinfulness of sin*, we must turn our attention to one of the most important doctrines in all the Scriptures - *the universality of sin*. Sin is not a rare or unusual phenomenon confined to a small minority of the human race, but it is universal in its scope. The Scriptures are clear that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” There is not one member of Adam’s race that has not joined him in the rebellion he began. Those who would deny such a truth must deny the testimony of Scripture, of human history, and of their own sinful thoughts, words, and deeds.

1. In Romans 3:23, is found one of the most important passages in all the Scriptures with regard to the sinfulness and disobedience of all men. What does this passage teach us?

**Study Help:** The phrase “fall short of the glory of God” is probably a reference to man’s constant failure to do all things for God’s praise, honor, and good pleasure. “For even though they knew God they did not honor Him as God...” (Romans 1:21).

2. The Scriptures are filled with innumerable references to the sinfulness and willing disobedience of man against God and His will. What do the following Scriptures teach us about the universal disobedience of all men?

I Kings 8:46

Psalm 143:2

Proverbs 20:9

Ecclesiastes 7:20

Isaiah 53:6

3. In the Romans 3:9-12 is found a collection of Old Testament quotes ordered by the apostle Paul to demonstrate humanity's universal sinfulness and willing disobedience against God. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents. Afterwards, write your thoughts on each verse:

a. *What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin (v.9).*

b. *As it is written, there is none righteous, not even one (v.10).*

c. *There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God (v.11).*

d. *They have all turned aside, together they have become useless (v.12).*

e. *There is none who does good, there is not even one (v.12).*

4. The Scripture's testimony against all men is offensive and some will not want to accept it as true. What warning is given in I John 1:8-10 to those who would oppose the biblical testimony against man and declare that they are not sinners?





Lesson Seven

# God's Disposition Towards the Sinner

The Scriptures teach that God is the Holy and Righteous Judge of His creation. Although He is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness, He will by no means leave the guilty unpunished (Exodus 34:6-7). When the holiness, righteousness, and love of God are confronted with the depravity and open rebellion of man, the result is divine judgment.

The writer of Ecclesiastes declared, “Behold, I have found only this, that God made men upright, but they have sought out many devices” (Ecclesiastes 7:29). This change in man must inevitably result in a change in God’s disposition toward man. Man was created “upright” and was a source of great satisfaction to God. This satisfaction is seen in God’s declaration that man’s creation was “good” (Genesis 1:31) and in the many blessings that He conferred upon man (Genesis 1:26-30). With the advent of sin, God’s disposition was changed, joy turned to grief, satisfaction turned to anger, favor turned to hatred, and peace turned to enmity.

## Grief

Can an all-sufficient and all-powerful God suffer or experience grief? While we must affirm that the God of the Scriptures is self-determining (*i.e.* His disposition and actions are not governed by the disposition and actions of others), and immutable in His perfections (*i.e.* He does not change), we must equally hold to the truth that He is not apathetic or unmoved by His creature’s response to Him. He is a real person who feels, loves, hates, grieves, and is capable of entering into a personal relationship.

When the Scriptures speak about God’s grief, it is always in the context of man’s sin. God grieves over the sin and rebellion of His creatures. This grief is the result of the offensiveness of sin to His holy person and of the destruction, misery, and loss that it brings upon His creation.

1. In Genesis 6:6, we find one of Scriptures greatest teachings regarding God’s reaction to the sinfulness and rebellion of His creatures. Write your thoughts on this passage of Scripture. What does it teach us?

2. There are three other very important passages in the Old Testament that refer to God grieving over the sins of men. Write your thoughts on these passages of Scripture. What do they teach us?

Isaiah 63:10

Ezekiel 6:9

3. In the New Testament, is found an important text regarding God's grief over man's sinfulness and rebellion against Him. Write your thoughts on Ephesians 4:30. What does it teach us?

4. It is important for us to understand that sin is portrayed in Scripture, not only as a thing that grieves God, but also as something that is a burden to Him. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Isaiah 43:24

Amos 2:13

**Study Help:** It is important to understand that God is not weakened by our sin, nor is His power diminished. Figurative language is being used to illustrate how the sins of man grieve the heart of God.

## Wrath or Anger

When the holiness, justice, and love of God meet the depravity, injustice, and lovelessness of man, the inevitable result is divine anger, indignation, or the wrath of God. The word translated “wrath” in the Old Testament comes from three Hebrew words: *qetsep* (wrath, anger, indignation); *hema* (wrath, anger, disgust, displeasure, fury, rage, heat, poison); and *‘aph* which literally means nostril or nose. The word came to denote anger in that the flaring of the nostrils is a sign of anger. In the New Testament, the word “wrath” is translated from two Greek words, *orge* (wrath, anger) and *thumos* (anger, indignation, passion, rage, wrath). In the Scriptures, divine wrath refers to God’s holy displeasure and righteous indignation directed towards the sinner and his sin.

In speaking of the wrath of God, it is important to understand that it is not an uncontrollable, irrational, or selfish emotion, but the

result of His holiness, righteousness and love, and a necessary element of His government. Because of who God is, He must react adversely to sin. *God is holy*, therefore He is repulsed by evil and breaks fellowship with the wicked. *God is love* and zealously loves all that is good. Such intense love for righteousness manifests itself in an equally intense hatred of all that is evil. *God is righteous*, therefore He must judge wickedness and condemn it. In His holiness, righteousness and love, God hates sin and comes with terrible and often violent wrath against it. If man is an object of God's wrath, it is because he has chosen to challenge God's sovereignty, violate His holy will, and expose himself to judgment.

Today, many reject the doctrine of divine wrath or any similar teaching that would even suggest that a loving, merciful God could be wrathful or that He would manifest such wrath in the judgment and condemnation of the sinner. They argue that such ideas are nothing more than the erroneous conclusions of primitive men who saw God as hostile, vengeful, and even cruel. As Christians, we should reject any doctrine that would portray God as cruel or ignore His compassion. Nevertheless, we must not forsake the Scripture's clear teaching on the doctrine of divine wrath and punishment – there are more reference in the Scriptures with regard to the anger and wrath of God, than there are to His love, kindness, and compassion. God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness, and yet He will punish the unrepentant sinner with a view to administering justice among His creatures and vindicating His holy Name.

1. Before we proceed any further in our study of the wrath of God, it is extremely important that we understand the holy and righteous nature of God's wrath. Though man's wrath is often times the result of sinful passions, the wrath of God is a manifestation of His righteousness and holiness.

a. *According to Romans 1:18, why does the wrath of God fall upon man?*

b. *According to Exodus 15:7, what attributes of God are revealed in every manifestation of God's wrath?*

2. How is God described in the following phrases taken from Nahum 1:2? Write your thoughts about these descriptions. What do they communicate to us about God?

a. *The Lord is avenging and W\_\_\_\_\_.*

b. *The Lord reserves W\_\_\_\_\_ for His E\_\_\_\_\_.*

3. It is important to understand that the description of God as avenging and wrathful is not confined to the Old Testament. How is God described in the following Scriptures from the New Testament? Explain the meaning of this description.

a. *The God who I\_\_\_\_\_ W\_\_\_\_\_ (Romans 3:5).*

b. *The God who is a C\_\_\_\_\_ F\_\_\_\_\_ (Hebrews 12:29).*

4. Throughout the Scriptures, several different terms are used to describe the wrath of God. It is necessary for us to consider the meaning of these terms so that we might have a better understanding of divine wrath.

a. *According to the Scriptures given, identify the terms that are used to describe the wrath of God.*

i. B\_\_\_\_\_ A\_\_\_\_\_ (Exodus 15:7).

ii. H\_\_\_\_\_ D\_\_\_\_\_ (Deuteronomy 9:19).

iii. I\_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 7:11).

iv. F\_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 90:11)

v. The F\_\_\_\_\_ A\_\_\_\_\_ of the Lord (Jeremiah 30:24).

b. *Explain in your own words what these terms communicate to us about the wrath of God.*

5. Throughout the Scriptures are found many metaphors that are employed to communicate the fierce nature of God's wrath against the sinner and his sin. In the following, we will consider a few of the most important.

a. *According to the Scriptures given, identify the metaphors that are used to describe the wrath of God.*

i. A F \_\_\_\_\_ that Consumes (Deuteronomy 32:22)

ii. A Sharpened S \_\_\_\_\_ (Psalm 7:12).

iii. An A \_\_\_\_\_ of Fiery Shaft (Psalm 7:12-13).

iv. A S \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_ (Jeremiah 30:23).

v. An O \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ (Nahum 1:8).

vi. A G \_\_\_\_\_ Wine P \_\_\_\_\_ (Revelation 14:19; Isaiah 63:2-6).

b. *Explain in your own words what these metaphors communicate to us about the wrath of God.*

6. In Psalm 7:11-13 is found a very revealing description of the wrath of God as it is manifest against sin. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then write your thoughts. What does this text teach us about the wrath of God?

7. According to the Scriptures, the wrath of God is so intense that no man or nation is able to endure it. It can be neither overcome nor resisted. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Jeremiah 10:10

Jeremiah 23:19-20

Nahum 1:6

8. The Scriptures also teach us that the wrath of God is so intense that it cannot be fully measured or comprehended by man. What does Psalm 90:11 teach us about this truth?

9. As we have already stated, it is important to understand that the wrath of God is not limited to the Old Testament Scriptures, but is also clearly presented in many Scriptures of the New Testament. What do the following New Testament Scriptures teach us about the wrath of God?

Romans 1:18

Romans 2:5-6

Ephesians 2:3

Ephesians 5:3 6 (Colossians 3:5 6)

10. From the Scriptures, it is clear that God is not only a God of love and mercy, but of wrath and vengeance. In His holiness, righteousness and love, God hates sin and comes with terrible and often violent vengeance against it. If man challenges God's sovereignty and violates His will, then he will expose himself to His wrath. According to the following Scriptures, how should all men respond to this truth?

Psalm 76:7

Psalm 90:11-12

11. Even though the reality of the wrath of God is undeniable, we should also understand that He is merciful. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but will delay His wrath and give the sinner ample opportunity to turn away from his sin. Nevertheless, those who continue in rebellion will most certainly face the wrath of God. What do the following Scriptures

teach us about this truth?

Exodus 34:6 7

Nahum 1:3

## Hatred

Closely related to the wrath or anger of God is His hatred. Words that are often used in association with God's hatred are: abhor, detest, loathe, etc. Many object to any teaching about the hatred of God on the false assumption that God is love, and therefore, He cannot hate. While the love of God is a reality that goes beyond comprehension, it is important to see that the love of God is the very reason for His hatred. We should not say that God is love, and therefore, He *cannot* hate, but rather, God is love, and therefore, He *must* hate. If a person truly *loves* life, acknowledges its sanctity, and cherishes all children as a gift from God, then they must *hate* abortion. It is impossible to passionately and purely love children and yet be neutral toward that which destroys them in the womb. In the same way, if God loves with the greatest intensity all that is upright and good, then He must, with equal intensity, hate all that is perverse and evil.

The Scriptures teach us that God not only hates sin, but that His hatred is directed toward those who practice sin. We have been taught that God loves the sinner and hates the sin, but such teaching is a denial of the Scriptures that clearly declare that God not only hates "iniquity", but that He hates "all who do iniquity" (Psalm 5:5). We must understand that it is impossible to separate the sin from the sinner. God does not punish sin, but He punishes the sinner. It is not sin that is condemned to hell, but the man who practices it.

What does it mean when the Scriptures declare that God hates sinners? The following should be considered: *First*, Webster defines hate as a feeling of extreme enmity toward someone, to regard another with active hostility, or to have a strong aversion toward

another: to detest, loathe, abhor, or abominate. Although these are hard words, most, if not all, are used in the Scripture to describe God's relationship to sin and the sinner. *Secondly*, we must understand that God hatred exists in perfect harmony with His other attributes. Unlike man, God's hatred is holy, just, and a result of His love. *Thirdly*, we must understand that God's hatred is not a denial of His love. Psalm 5:5 is not a denial of John 3:16 or Matthew 5:44-45. Although God's wrath abides upon the sinner, although He is angry with the wicked every day, and although He hates all who do iniquity, His love is of such a nature that He is able to love those who are the very objects of His hatred and work on their behalf for their salvation. *Fourthly*, although God is longsuffering toward the objects of His hatred and holds out to them salvation, there will come a time when He will withdraw His offer, and reconciliation will no longer be possible. Sinful men should consider this truth with fear and trembling.

1. The Scriptures clearly teach that God not only hates the sin, but that His hatred is directed towards those who practice sin. What does Psalm 5:4-5 teach us about this truth?

2. Psalm 5:5 is not alone in attesting to the holy hatred of God against sin and those who do wrong. In Psalm 11:4-7 is found another very important text concerning God's hatred. What does this text teach us? Write your thoughts on each of the following phrases:

a. *The LORD is in His holy temple; the LORD'S throne is in heaven (v.4).*

2. *His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men. The LORD tests the righteous and the wicked (v.4-5).*

c. *And the one who loves violence His soul hates (v.5).*

d. *Upon the wicked He will rain snares; Fire and brimstone and burning wind will be the portion of their cup (v.6).*

e. *For the LORD is righteous, He loves righteousness; the upright will behold His face (v.7).*

3. In the following, we will consider five passages of Scripture that employ the words abhor, detest, loathe, and abomination. Our purpose is to understand in greater depths, God's holy hatred toward sin and the sinner. Carefully read each text and write your comments. What do they teach us?

Leviticus 20:23

Deuteronomy 18:12; 25:16

Psalm 95:10

Titus 1:16

Revelation 21:8

## Enmity

We often hear about sinful man's unceasing war against God, but little is taught about God's unceasing war against the wicked. The hostility between God and the sinner is not one sided, but mutual. The Scriptures clearly teach that God considers the sinner to be His enemy and has declared war upon him. The sinner's only hope is to drop his weapon and lift the white flag of surrender before it is forever too late. This is the clear teaching of Scripture.

1. In Nahum 1:2, is found a reference to the enmity that God has towards the sinner and the judgment that follows. Read the text and write your thoughts on the following phrases.

a. *The LORD takes vengeance on His adversaries.*

b. *And He reserves wrath for His enemies.*

2. Another important Old Testament reference to the enmity of God against the sinner is found in Isaiah 63:10. This Scripture not only demonstrates the enmity of God against the sinner, but also reveals the reason for such enmity. Read the text and write your thoughts.

3. In Romans 5:10, is found one of the most important references in the Scriptures with regard to the enmity of God against the sinner. It also demonstrates that this doctrine is not limited to the Old Testament, but reaches into the New. Write your thoughts on this passage.

**Study Help:** It is often held that man is the enemy of God, but God is never the enemy of man. The statement however, is quite misleading. In Romans 5:10, both ideas are present, but the reader should keep in mind that the sinner's opposition to God is only secondary, the primary thought of the text is God's holy opposition to the sinner.

## Vengeance

Closely related to the wrath of God is His vengeance. In the Scriptures, the desire for vengeance is often presented as a vice of wicked men (Leviticus 19:18; I Samuel 25:25, 30-33), therefore it is difficult for us to understand how a holy and loving God could be a *God of Vengeance*. What we must understand is that God's vengeance is always motivated by His zeal for holiness and justice.

Today, many reject the doctrine of divine vengeance or any teaching that would even suggest that a loving and merciful God could be vengeful. They would argue that such ideas are nothing more than the erroneous conclusions of primitive men who saw God as hostile and cruel. As Christians, we should reject any doctrine that would portray God as cruel or ignore His compassion. Nevertheless, we must not forsake the Scripture's clear teaching on the doctrine of divine vengeance. God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness, but He is also just. He will punish the sinner with the purpose of vindicating His Name and administering justice among His creatures. In light of man's sin, God is right to avenge Himself. Three times in the book of Jeremiah, God asks, "Shall I not punish them for these things? On a nation such as this shall I not avenge Myself? (5:9, 29, 9:9).

1. In the Scriptures, a name carries great significance and communicates something about the one who bears it. What does the following divine name in Psalm 94:1 reveal to us about God?

2. How is God described in Nahum 1:2? Explain the meaning of these descriptions? What they communicate to us about God?

a. A *J* \_\_\_\_\_ and A \_\_\_\_\_ *God is the Lord.*

b. *The Lord takes V* \_\_\_\_\_ *on His A* \_\_\_\_\_ .

3. In Deuteronomy 32:39-42 is found one of the most terrifying illustrations of God's vengeance against those who despise His authority and violate His Law. Read the passage carefully and write your thoughts on each phrase.

a. *See now that I, I am He, and there is no god besides Me (v.39).*

b. *It is I who put to death and give life. I have wounded and it is I who heal, and there is no one who can deliver from My hand (v.39).*

c. *If I sharpen My flashing sword, and My hand takes hold on justice, I will render vengeance on My adversaries, and I will repay those who hate Me (v.41).*

d. *I will make My arrows drunk with blood, and My sword will devour flesh, with the blood of the slain and the captives... (v.42).*

4. Before we turn our attention to the New Testament, we will consider two more Old Testament Scriptures that will give us greater insight into the reality and meaning God's vengeance against the sinner and his sin. Write your thoughts.

Deuteronomy 7:10

Isaiah 1:24

5. It is important to understand that the doctrine of divine vengeance is not limited to the Old Testament, but is clearly taught in the New Testament. Whenever the holiness, justice, and love of God are confronted with man's rebellion, the result is divine wrath and vengeance. What does Hebrews 10:30-31 teach us about this truth?

## Lesson Eight

# God's Judgment of the Sinner

Having considered God's disposition toward the unrepentant sinner, we will now consider the actual judgments that result from sin. There are many today who avoid the doctrine of divine judgment, and others who deny it altogether. However, if we believe the Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God, we must accept this doctrine with the same conviction as the rest. God is the Judge of all the earth (Genesis 18:25) who will punish the wicked according to what is due them.

## Separated From God

As physical death is the separation of the soul from the body, spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God. God is morally

perfect and separated from all evil. It is impossible for Him to take pleasure in sin or join in fellowship with those who practice unrighteousness. Therefore, man's moral corruption and unrighteousness stand as a great wall between himself and God and make fellowship with God impossible. Unless this sin is taken out of the way, man is destined to live and die outside of God's fellowship and cut off from the fullness of His blessing.

1. In His holiness, God cannot be neutral about sin or those who practice it, but must hate sin and turn away from it as an abomination. What does Habakkuk 1:13 teach us about this truth?

2. The Scriptures not only teach us that sin is repugnant to God, but that it results in broken fellowship between God and the sinner. What do the following Scriptures teach about this truth?

Proverbs 15:29

Isaiah 59:1 2

3. In the book of Ephesians, we find several texts that describe the great separation that existed between the pagan gentiles and the one True God. These texts also illustrate the great separation that exists between God and the sinner. According to the following Scriptures, how is the sinner described?

a. S \_\_\_\_\_ *from Christ (Ephesians 2:12)*

2. E \_\_\_\_\_ *from the commonwealth (i.e. citizenship) among God's people (Ephesians 2:12)*

c. S \_\_\_\_\_ *to the covenants of promise (Ephesians 2:12)*

d. *Having no H \_\_\_\_\_ (Ephesians 2:12)*

e. *And without G \_\_\_\_\_ in the world (Ephesians 2:12)*

f. *A S \_\_\_\_\_ and A \_\_\_\_\_ (Ephesians 2:19)*

g. E \_\_\_\_\_ *from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18)*

4. Based upon the Scriptures we have studied in questions 1-3, explain how man's sin results in broken fellowship and separation from God:

# Given over to Sin

The Scriptures teach that all men are born spiritually dead and morally depraved, and that they possess an almost limitless capacity for evil. If they were allowed to give full rein to their depravity, the result would be the abolition of man. For the preservation of society and for His own purpose and glory, God restrains the wickedness of men and keeps them from being the worst that they could be. This restraining work of God is the only thing that stands between humanity and self-annihilation. It is one of the greatest manifestations of God's grace towards all.

The divine act of "giving men over" to their sin occurs when God ceases to restrain man's evil or allows man more freedom to exercise his depravity. God withdraws His restraining grace and turns men over to the moral corruption and depravity of their own hearts. It leads to destruction and is one of the most terrible manifestations of the wrath of God. In the following, we will consider one of the darkest texts in all the Word of God - Romans 1:18-32. The most terrifying thing about this passage is that the judgment of which it speaks has been manifested in differing degrees in every generation since the fall, including our own. Read Romans 1:18-32 several times until you are familiar with its contents and then answer the following questions.

1. According to verse 18, against whom is the wrath of God revealed and why?

2. According to verses 19-20, how is it that the Scriptures can rightly declare that all men are "without excuse," even those who have never had the privilege of the written revelation of God through the Scriptures?

**Study Help:** This does not mean that all men know everything that may be known about God or that all men are granted the same degree of revelation. It means that all men, everywhere and at all times, possess sufficient knowledge of the one true God so that they will be without excuse for their sins on the Day of Judgment. Although limited, God's revelation of Himself to all men has not been ambiguous or unclear. He has made it "evident" to all men that there is one true God and that He alone should be worshipped. The phrase "within them" proves that the knowledge of the one true God is not only demonstrated through the works of creation, but that God Himself has imprinted this knowledge upon the very heart of every man. The universe that God has made and that proves His existence simply acts as a confirmation or reminder of what all men already know - there is one true God who is worthy of worship and obedience.

3. According to verses 21-23 and 25, what has been the universal response of mankind to the revelation of God?

a. *For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks (v.21).*

b. *But they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened (v.21).*

c. *Professing to be wise, they became fools (v.22).*

d. *And exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures (v.23).*

e. *For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen (v.25).*

4. In verse 18, we learned that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against men who willingly deny and suppress the truth. According to verses 24, 26, and 28, how is the wrath of God manifested against them?

# Given over to Miseries

The sin, to which men are given over leads to innumerable and indescribable temporal miseries. Excepting the reality of death, the miseries of this present life are possibly the greatest evidence of God's judgment upon sin. We are not only fallen creatures, but also we live in a fallen world. Our existence is not only fleeting, but also encumbered with great difficulties and hardships. There are miseries from without and within.

There is a tendency in our present age of Christianity to explain away these miseries of life as "natural" consequences of sin and deny any possibility that they might be the result of God's sovereignty, justice, and wrath. Many seek to remove any responsibility from God and somehow protect Him from accusations of lovelessness or cruelty. Nevertheless, the Scriptures clearly reveal that the temporal miseries of this life are, in varying degrees, a result of God's judgment upon the sinner and the fallen world in which he dwells. Romans 1:18 teaches us that the wrath of God "is," revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. The temporal miseries of this world are one aspect of this revelation.

Although the temporal miseries that engulf every aspect of human life are primarily a revelation of God's justice and wrath, they are not void of mercy. Every misery and hardship from birth to death is a divine reminder to man of his fallenness, the corruption of his soul, and his alienation from God. The pain of childbirth calls out to man. The calamities, natural catastrophes, wars, pestilences, and famines of this world call out to man. The disappointments and frustrations of this life call out to man. The inward struggles of dissatisfaction and restlessness call out to man. The ever-present threat of death calls out to man...

"You are lost and must be found; you are alienated and must be reconciled; you are fallen and must be raised; you are dislocated, and must be set right; you are disfigured and must be transformed."

1. In Genesis 3:16-19, is found a description of the misery that fell upon mankind and creation as a result of sin. Explain how each misery is both a revelation of God's judgment and a revelation of His mercy.

a. *The Judgment Upon the Woman (v.16)*

b. *The Judgment Upon the Man (v.17-19)*

2. The consequences of the curse that have fallen upon man since the first rebellion of Adam are clearly set before us in the Wisdom literature of Scripture. What do the following texts from Job, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes teach us about the inevitable miseries and frustration of fallen man?

Job 5:7

Job 7:1-2

Psalm 89:47

Ecclesiastes 2:22-23

## Subject to Death

Without a doubt, the greatest proof of the wrath of God against the unrighteousness of man is physical death - the separation of the soul from the body. From Adam until the present, all men are faced with the terrible and undeniable reality that they will die. Regardless of human greatness, power, or social position, death is the unavoidable destiny that awaits all men. The Scriptures teach us that this terrifying reality is the result of sin. It is important to note that death is not annihilation. Once born, men do not cease to exist, but will continue on either in eternal communion with God in heaven or in eternal separation from Him in hell.

Again, it is necessary that one find in death, not only divine judgment, but also mercy. Death is "God's Great Reminder" to man of his mortality and need of redemption. Every obituary, every funeral procession, every grave marker cries out to man, to turn from the concerns of this world to the concerns of eternity, to make ready for the reaper, to prepare to meet his God.

## A Biblical Description of Death

Although death is an undeniable reality that confronts mankind relentlessly, its exact nature remains a mystery to the living. We cannot rely upon even the most sincere accounts of those who have supposedly "gone to the other side" and returned to tell us. If we are to have a "sure word" about so great a mystery, we must turn to the Scriptures.

The Holy Scripture speaks often about death, with many warnings and exhortations, and yet, it offers few answers with regard to its exact nature. What can be known for sure must be gleaned from the few direct references found in the text. These teach us two great truths:

*\* Death is not the end of conscious human existence.*

*\* At death, the body returns to the ground (until the resurrection), and the spirit returns to God.*

1. In James 2:26, is found a simple, yet profound description of death. Mediate upon the text and then write your thoughts. What is death? When does death occur?

2. From James 2:26, we learned that at death, the spirit is separated from the body. In Ecclesiastes 12:7, we will discover one of the most profound truths ever revealed to mortal man. According to this text, what happens to the body and the spirit at the moment of separation? (The same truth is found in Psalm 146:4).

3. In the Scriptures, several important metaphors are employed to help us understand the nature of death. Identify each of the following metaphors.

a. To B \_\_\_\_\_ one's L \_\_\_\_\_ (*Genesis 49:33*).

b. To P \_\_\_\_\_ away (*Job 34:20*).

c. To R \_\_\_\_\_ to D \_\_\_\_\_ (*Genesis 3:19; Psalm 104:29*).

d. To be C \_\_\_\_\_ off (*Job 24:24*).

e. To D \_\_\_\_\_ (*II Timothy 4:6; II Peter 1:15*).

## Death as a Manifestation of God's Judgment

From its first mention in the Scriptures, death is treated as the result of God's judgment against the sin of man (*Genesis 2:17*). Why do humans die? The Scriptures' response is clear and unapologetic - they die because they are sinners. God declared to Adam, "For in the day that you eat from it you will surely die." From this text and others, it is clear that death was not woven into the fabric of the original creation, but entered into our world through the sin of Adam and has passed on to all men, for all men sin. Every tombstone and grave marker is a manifestation of God's judgment against our fallen race. To say that death is always a manifestation of God's judgment does not necessarily mean that some die sooner than others do because they are greater sinners. There are children who die in the womb without committing a single act of sin, and there are those who live in open rebellion against God for decades. It simply means that every one of us is part of a fallen, sinful race, and that death is one manifestation of God's judgment against us.

1. Throughout the Scriptures, death is seen as the result of man's sin. Whether it is the imputed sin of Adam or the personal unrighteousness of all men, the principle is the same - all men die because all men sin. What do the following Scriptures from the Old and New Testaments teach us about this truth?

Ezekiel 18:4, 20

Romans 6:23

2. Both the Old and New Testaments are clear and unapologetic - the inevitable consequence of sin is death. In James 1:15, the Scriptures reveal to us the inner working of sin in the life of man and the fatal results. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then write your thoughts:

**Study Help:** When fallen man gives in to his sinful desires, the result is sin. In end of sin is always death.

3. In Isaiah 64:6, the relationship between man's sin and death is illustrated in poetic fashion. Read the text until you are familiar with its content. Then write your thoughts regarding the following questions:

a. *How is man's moral corruption described?*

b. *What are the inevitable consequences of man's moral corruption and active pursuit of sin?*

4. In Psalm 90:2-10, is found a tremendous poetic portrayal of death as a manifestation of God's judgment against sinful men. Write your thoughts on each of the following phrases.

a. *You turn man back into dust and say, "Return, O children of men." (v.3).*

b. *You have swept them away like a flood, they fall asleep; in the morning they are like grass which sprouts anew. In the morning, it flourishes and sprouts anew; toward evening, it fades and withers away (v.5-6).*

2. *For we have been consumed by Your anger and by Your wrath we have been dismayed. You have placed our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your presence. For all our days have declined in Your fury; we have finished our years like a sigh (v.9).*

d. *As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; For soon it is gone and we fly away (v.10).*

## Death as a Sovereign Decree and Work of God

According to the Scriptures, death is a consequence of God's judgment against man's sin. Not only will all men die, but all will die according to the sovereign decree of God. He has not only appointed the day of our death, but He Himself will bring it about. He gives life and takes it, makes alive and kills. Much of contemporary Christian thought would be extremely hesitant to admit that death is the result of the sovereign decree and work of God. They would rather explain death as a mere consequence of living in a fallen world, or as something beyond the control of a loving Creator. This is a blatant contradiction of the testimony of Scripture.

1. How is God described in Daniel 5:23? Complete the description and then explain its meaning:

*The God in whose H\_\_\_\_\_ are your L\_\_\_\_\_ - B\_\_\_\_\_*

*and your W\_\_\_\_\_.*

2. The Scriptures are clear and unapologetic that God is absolutely sovereign over the life and death of every man. In the

following, are two of the most important texts in Scripture with regard to this truth. What do they teach us?

Deuteronomy 32:39

I Samuel 2:6

3. The sovereignty of God teaches us that the death of every man has already been appointed by divine decree. A certain number of days have been given to us all. They may not be extended even one breath beyond what God has determined. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Job 14:5

Ecclesiastes 3:2

Hebrews 9:27

Luke 12:20

## The Universality of Death

One biblical truth that stands without any opponent, in any realm of science, history, or letters, is that all men die. The great mass of humanity lives under an unrelenting mortal plague. Billions have fallen from it scourge, and everyday, thousands more join the number. There is no cure, and there is no hope that it will somehow dissipate with time.

Death is so frequent and widespread that it may seem unnecessary to consider its universality. However, it is necessary to consider such a doctrine, not because it is denied, but because it is often forgotten. We know that we are mortal creatures. We know that we are dying. We know that we cannot escape death or even impede it coming. Therefore, we consciously or unconsciously seek to drive the thought of death as far from us as possible. We have become so proficient at banishing death from our thoughts that we can carry the caskets of our closest friends without one moment's meditation on the truth that the same fate awaits us all. For this reason, it necessary for us to hear the truth we seek to suppress:

1. In the Scriptures, there is a very important metaphor used to communicate the universality of death. Identify this metaphor and explain its meaning?

The W\_\_\_\_\_ of all the E\_\_\_\_\_ (Joshua 23:14; I Kings 2:1).

2. Hebrews 9:27 is possibly the most important passage in the Scriptures regarding the universality of death. What truths are revealed in this text?

3. An important truth that is often taught in the Scriptures is that death is not a respecter of persons. It comes on all men alike - rich and poor, wise man and fool. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Job 21:22-26

Ecclesiastes 2:16

## The Brevity, Frailty, and Futility of Man

The first man was created in the image of God. With the advent of sin, all was lost, and man's existence became tragically twisted and deformed beyond recognition. Man became a being of brief duration, weariness, and futility. He lives his life until all vitality is drained away, every purpose is demolished, and the body finally returns to the dust from which it came. It is not without reason that the preacher cries out, "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity (Ecclesiastes 1:2).

1. Throughout the Scriptures are found numerous descriptions of the frailty of man, the brevity of his life, and the futility of all his strivings. In the following are some of the most important texts. Meditate upon each text and then write your thoughts - What are the metaphors used to describe man and his life? What do these metaphors communicate?

Job 14:1-2

Psalm 39:4-6

Psalm 78:39

Psalm 103:14-16

Psalm 144:3-4

James 4:14

2. In the book of Job are found two passages of Scriptures that illustrate both the frailty and brevity of a man's life. Meditate carefully upon each text, and then, write your thoughts:

a. *The Frailty of a Man's Life (Job 4:18-21)*

b. *The Brevity of a Man's Life (Job 9:25-26)*

3. In the following passages of Scriptures, are found a few of the most striking descriptions of the futility and vanity of man's life. Read the texts until you are familiar with their content and then write your thoughts. How is the futility of a man's life described?

Psalm 49:10-14

Ecclesiastes 3:19-20

Ecclesiastes 5:15-17

I Timothy 6:7

4. The Scriptures teach that all men sin and therefore all men die. Death is the inevitable reality that awaits every one of us. It is our unavoidable, inescapable, and undefeatable enemy. What do the following passages of Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Job 14:7-12

Psalm 49:7-9

Psalm 89:48

Ecclesiastes 8:8

5. To bring our study of the frailty of man and the brevity of life to a close we will consider two last texts of Scripture - Isaiah 40:6-8 and Ecclesiastes 12:1. In the former is found one of the most majestic declarations of both the brevity of man and eternity of God. In the later is found an extremely important admonition to perishing man. Read each text until you are familiar with its contents, and then write the truths that you have gleaned.

a. *The Truth about Man (Isaiah 40:6-8)*

b. *How then Shall we Live (Ecclesiastes 12:1)*





## Lesson Nine

# The Final Judgment of the Wicked

Possibly the most awesome doctrine in all the Scriptures is that of the Final Judgment. The truth that every one of Adam's race will stand before a righteous and all-knowing God, and be judged according to their every thought, word, and deed, is something that goes beyond the scope of our wildest imagination.

Although the doctrine of Final Judgment is often scorned and rejected as a relic from the past, it must be remembered that it is the clear teaching of Scripture, and a reasonable truth to accept in light of what we know about the attributes of God. It is certainly within God's prerogative to govern the creatures He has created, and to judge the creatures He governs. It is not only His prerogative, but it is demanded by His righteous character. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? Is it not necessary that a moral God carry out moral justice in the universe He has made? Shall we deny God the very right we demand for ourselves in our own courts of law? Certainly not!

## A Fundamental Doctrine of the Scriptures

Final Judgment is a fundamental doctrine of the Scriptures. It is impossible to hold to the divine inspiration and infallibility of the Scriptures, without embracing the doctrine of the Final Judgment and eternal condemnation of the wicked. Although much of what is to be known about this doctrine remains a mystery, it is an absolute certainty of Scripture. Every one of Adam's race will be judged by God. The wicked will be condemned to eternal punishment and the redeemed in Christ will inherit the fullness of salvation.

1. The final judgment is an essential doctrine of the Scriptures and the Christian faith. This truth is clearly communicated by

the writer of Hebrews 6:1-2 who refers to the doctrine as:

An E\_\_\_\_\_ teaching about the Christ. The word comes from the Greek word *arche*, which means beginning or origin. It means that the doctrine of eternal judgment is a basic or foundational teaching of Christianity. It is not a theological speculation, but a biblical certainty.

2. God's final judgment of mankind is so embedded in Old Testament thought, that to deny the reality of coming judgment would be to deny the infallibility of the Scriptures. What do the following Old Testament Scriptures teach us about the certainty of God's final judgment?

Psalm 9:7-8

Psalm 96:10-13

Ecclesiastes 3:17

Ecclesiastes 11:9

Ecclesiastes 12:13-14

2. It is important to understand that the doctrine of eternal judgment is not only an “Old Testament” doctrine. What do the following New Testament Scriptures teach us about the certainty of God’s final judgment?

Romans 14:10-12

Hebrews 9:27

II Peter 3:7

Revelation 20:12

3. In the Scriptures, there are many names given to describe that “day” when God will judge all men. Identify each name according to the Scripture given and then write your thoughts on what each name communicates to us.

a. The D\_\_\_\_\_ of J\_\_\_\_\_ (II Peter 2:9).

2. The day of W\_\_\_\_\_ and revelation of the righteous J\_\_\_\_\_ of God (Romans 2:5).

c. The G\_\_\_\_\_ D\_\_\_\_\_ (Jude 1:6).

d. The D\_\_\_\_\_ of G\_\_\_\_\_ (II Peter 3:12).

4. On the Day of Judgment, God will consider the thoughts, words, and deeds of every member of Adam's race. What do the following Scriptures teach us about the thoroughness of God's judgment? Will anything be overlooked or hidden before Him?

Mark 4:22; Luke 8:17; 12:2-3

Ecclesiastes 12:14

I Corinthians 4:5

Hebrews 4:13

5. In Revelation 20:11-15 is found the most descriptive passage in the Scriptures regarding the Final Judgment. Read the text several times until you are familiar with its contents and then answer the following questions:

a. *How are God and the throne of God described in verse 11? How is the greatness and awesomeness of God communicated?*

b. *According to verses 12-13, who are standing before the throne of God? Does anyone escape from the judgment or is anyone exempt? Explain your answer.*

c. *According to verses 12-13, how are men judged? What is the basis for God's judgment? Is the judgment thorough? Explain your answer.*

d. *According to verses 14-15, what is the fate of everyone who has rejected Jesus Christ, and is judged according their own deeds?*

# Hell

We have learned that the wrath of God is manifested in man's alienation from God, his being turned over to sin, exposed to misery, and subjected to physical death. In the following, we will consider the greatest of all manifestations of divine wrath - *hell*. One of the most solemn truths of Scripture is that the consequences of sin do not end with physical death. After death, there is a Final Judgment, and those who die in their sins will spend eternity in Hell. Even though, this doctrine is often ridiculed and rejected, we cannot ignore the clear teaching of Scripture. There is a place of eternal judgment for the wicked.

## *Hades and Gehenna*

In the New Testament, two specific terms are used with reference to hell - *Hades and Gehenna*. We can come to a clearer understanding of the nature of hell through a careful study of these two references.

### Hades

The word "Hades" comes from the Greek word *hades*, which occurs ten times in the New Testament (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14). Although it is most often employed as a reference to death and the general abode of the dead, it is clearly used in Luke 16:23 with reference to a place where the wicked are tormented. There are two major interpretations with regard to Hades and its relationship to Gehenna: (i) Hades is the temporary abode of the wicked until the last judgment when the wicked are reunited with their resurrected bodies and assigned to an eternal place of torment called Gehenna. (ii) Hades and Gehenna are a reference to the same place of torment. Before the last judgment and the resurrection, the wicked suffer in a disembodied state. After the resurrection and the last judgment, the wicked are united with their resurrected bodies and returned to the same place of torment.

### Gehenna

The word "Gehenna" occurs twelve times in the New Testament (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). It is the Greek form of the Aramaic expression *gehinnam*, which refers to the *valley of Hinnom* (Joshua 15:8), located to the south of Jerusalem (today it is called *Wadi er-Rababi*). Under the reigns of the wicked kings Ahaz and Manasseh, it was a place where parents offered their children as sacrifices to the Ammonite god Molech (see II Kings 16:3; 21:6; Jeremiah 32:35). During the reign of Josiah, the practice of child sacrifice was ended and the valley of Hinnom was desecrated (II Kings 23:10-14). It eventually became a refuse pile for garbage, the carcasses of dead animals, and the bodies of executed criminals. It was a place of continuous fire and smoke, and was infested with maggots, worms, and vermin. By the time of Christ, the word "Gehenna" was commonly employed to denote the place of final punishment and torment for the wicked - a place of eternal death, pollution, defilement, and misery.

## *The Nature of Hell*

In any attempt to understand the nature of hell, we must proceed with much caution. On one hand, we must be careful to follow the Scriptures and not the fanciful descriptions of hell created by both ancient and modern literature and media. On the other hand, we must be careful not to explain away the doctrine of hell or diminish its horrors. According to the Scriptures, and especially the

teachings of Jesus Christ, there is a real place called hell that is both terrible in its suffering and eternal in its duration.

## Exclusion from the Favorable Presence of God

The first, and possibly the most terrible truth about hell, is that it is exclusion from the favorable presence of God. In modern Evangelical thinking, hell is often described as a place of torment outside of the presence of God. It is often said that heaven is heaven because of the presence of God, and hell is hell because of His absence. Although this statement has an element of truth, it is extremely misleading. It is not the absence of God that makes hell a place of torment, but the absence of His favorable presence. In fact, hell is hell because God is there in the fullness of His justice and wrath.

1. In II Thessalonians 1:9, is found one of the most important texts in Scripture with regard to the separation of the wicked from the favorable presence of God. Read the text until you are familiar with its contents and then write your thoughts.

2. In the Scriptures, several texts refer to the final judgment and hell as being cast out or excluded from the presence of God. Consider each text carefully and then write your thoughts.

Matthew 7:23 (Luke 13:27)

Matthew 25:30 (8:12; 22:13)

3. It is not the absence of God that makes hell a place of torment, but the absence of His favorable presence. Hell is hell because God is there in the fullness of His justice and wrath. What does Revelation 14:9-10 teach us about this truth?

## Indescribable Suffering

It is impossible to be faithful to the Scriptures, especially to the words of Jesus, while at the same time, seeking to deny or ignore the truths that they teach regarding the suffering of the wicked in hell. As we will see, the Scriptures, and especially Jesus, speak about hell has a place of indescribable suffering. It is rightly said that the bliss of heaven goes beyond the mind to comprehend and the power of human language to communicate. According to the Scriptures, the same may be said of the sufferings and terrors of hell. It is important to remember that although the doctrine of hell is repulsive to many, it does not make it any less a reality.

Before we proceed, it is important to understand that hell is not a place where the wicked are cruelly tortured, but where they suffer perfect justice for their sin. God is not cruel. He does not gleefully torture his enemies. In fact, the Bible teaches that God

takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:23, 32). God is a God of justice, and hell is the place where that justice is dispensed. The wicked receive the exact measure of punishment that is due them.

1. According to the words of Jesus in the following Scriptures, how is hell described? What does each description teach us about the suffering found in hell?

a. *A place of T\_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 16:28).*

b. *A place where there is W\_\_\_\_\_ and G\_\_\_\_\_ of teeth (Matthew 8:12).* This description of the sufferings of the wicked in hell is important because of its frequent use by Jesus (Matthew 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28).

2. In the following are found two passages of Scripture that reveal to us something of the indescribable suffering in hell. Read through each passage until you are familiar with its contents and then summarize what they reveal to us about the torments of hell:

Luke 16:19-31

Revelation 14:9-11

3. Although the Bible makes it clear that every inhabitant in hell will suffer unspeakable torment, it also teaches that suffering will be according to the sinfulness of each person's life. What do the following Scriptures teach us about this truth?

Matthew 11:21-24

Luke 12:47-48

Matthew 23:14

## Unending Punishment

Possibly the most frightful truth about hell is that it is eternal. All who pass through its gates are without any hope of future redemption or restoration. They are eternally condemned. This one truth is probably the one most repulsive to those who reject the biblical doctrine of hell. How can eternal punishment be just? Does not the punishment far exceed the crime?

When thinking about the eternal nature of hell, two truths must be considered: First, we must take into account the abhorrent nature of sin. Sin committed against an infinitely worthy God is deserving of eternal punishment. (2) The punishment of hell is eternal, because throughout eternity the wicked continue in their rebellion without repentance. We must not assume that the wicked repent on the Day of Judgment or even after a short stay in hell. Rather their hatred of God, hardness of heart, and shameless rebellion continue throughout eternity. Eternal rebellion demands eternal punishment.

1. How is hell described in the following Scriptures? What do these descriptions communicate to us about the eternal nature of hell?

a. E \_\_\_\_\_ F \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 18:8; 25:41; Jude 1:7*).

b. E \_\_\_\_\_ P \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 25:46*).

c. E \_\_\_\_\_ D \_\_\_\_\_ (*II Thessalonians 1:9*). Although some would wrongly argue

that the word “destruction” indicates a ceasing of existence, the word “eternal” makes this interpretation impossible. In hell, the wicked are given over to an existence that can rightly be described as continual destruction.

2. What do the following biblical texts teach us about the eternal nature of hell and the eternal punishment measured out upon the wicked?

Mark 9:47-48

Revelation 14:11

Revelation 20:10 (Matthew 25:41)

3. Many who deny the eternal nature of hell would never deny the eternal nature of heaven. However, consistency requires that if one rejects the eternal nature of hell, he must also reject the eternal nature of heaven. How does Matthew 25:46 demonstrate this truth?

According to Matthew 25:46, the wicked go away into E\_\_\_\_\_ punishment and the righteous go away into E\_\_\_\_\_ life. It would be inconsistent to give two contradictory meanings to the same word in the same sentence. If “eternal” punishment does not really mean that the wicked are punished forever, then “eternal” life does not really mean that the righteous live forever in the presence of God.

## A Biblical Description of Hell

In the Scriptures, many graphic and striking descriptions of hell are given. Whether they are to be taken as literal or not has been a long-standing debate even among conservative scholars. Is hell a place of literal fire and darkness, of brimstone and smoke? If someone denies a literal interpretation of these descriptions with the purpose of diminishing the sufferings of the wicked in hell, they are to be dismissed. However, it is acceptable to hold these descriptions to be figurative in the sense that they are an attempt to describe something so terrifying that it goes beyond the capacity of the human mind to conceive and beyond the power of our human language to communicate. To describe the terrors of hell, the biblical writers used the greatest terrors known to man on earth, but one can be assured that hell is worse than anything found on earth. Fire and darkness, brimstone and smoke are only a feeble attempt to describe a reality far more terrifying than even these words can convey. In the same way that the glories of heaven cannot be comprehended by the human mind or communicated through human language, the terrors of hell are beyond our comprehension and ability to describe.

1. How is hell described in the following Scriptures? What do these descriptions communicate to us about the nature of hell?

a. *F* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 3:10; 7:19*). Throughout the Scriptures, the idea of fire is used to communicate the judgment and wrath of God revealed against sin and the sinner. It is God’s holy and just reaction to all that contradicts His nature and will. It is fierce, terrifying, and irresistible. As terrifying as literal fire is to a burning man, it cannot begin to describe the fire of God’s wrath that is measured out against the wicked in hell.

b. *E* \_\_\_\_\_ *F* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 18:8; 25:41*). The emphasis here is that the sufferings of the wicked in hell are forever. There is no hope of redemption or restoration for those in hell.

c. *U* \_\_\_\_\_ *F* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 3:12*). The idea communicated here is that the torments of hell will not only be eternal, but undiminished. There will never any relief for the condemned.

d. *L* \_\_\_\_\_ of *F* \_\_\_\_\_ and *B* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Revelation 20:10*). This description is given to communicate the immensity and power of hell. It is not just a sprinkle or small stream of torment, but the inhabitants of hell will be like those shipwrecked in a massive churning sea of God’s wrath, battered and cast to and fro by the violent and never ending waves of God’s righteous indignation. Like men drowning in a massive churning caldron of fire.

e. *F* \_\_\_\_\_ of *F* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 13:42*). The truth communicated here is one of intensity. In a furnace, there is little chance for the heat to escape, no rain to dampen the flames, and no breeze to bring refreshment or relief. The intensity of hell’s sufferings will never be diminished.

f. *O* \_\_\_\_\_ *D* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 25:30*). The truth communicated here is one of alienation. The inhabitants of hell are cast out and no place is found for them. They are not only alienated from

God, but from fellowship with others. It is a place of absolute and unbearable isolation, apart from the life and light of God.

g. *B* \_\_\_\_\_ *D* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Jude 1:13*). There are very few things more solitary or more incarcerating than pitch-black darkness. There is the greatest sense of doom or hopelessness related to such darkness.

h. *S* \_\_\_\_\_ *D* \_\_\_\_\_ (*Revelation 20:14; 21:8*). The final destiny of the wicked is the very opposite of the believer. There is no longer a fear of death for the believer (*Hebrews 2:15*) because death is no more (*Revelation 21:4*). In contrast, the wicked will live in a state of never-ending death. They will have a conscious existence, but with none of the blessings, hopes, or joys of life.

2. Having considered some of the descriptive names of hell, write your thoughts. How would you describe hell to another?

# Warnings to Avoid Hell at all Cost

The terrors of hell are clearly communicated in the Scripture's warning to avoid hell at any cost. Of all the terrors that could ever come upon a man, hell is the worst. It is important to note that Jesus Christ spoke about hell more than all the other biblical writers combined. He clearly and unapologetically taught about the realities of hell and gave men the greatest warnings to flee from the wrath to come.

1. In the following, are two of the gravest warnings given by Jesus Christ concerning the terrors of hell. Write your thoughts. What do these warnings communicate to us about the terrors of hell and the need to fear it?

Matthew 10:28

Luke 12:5

2. Jesus and the biblical writers not only taught about the terrors of hell, but they warned men to avoid the condemnation of hell at any cost. What do the following Scriptures teach us regarding this truth?

Luke 13:24

**Study Help:** The word “strive” comes from a Greek word meaning to contend, struggle, labor fervently or with tremendous zeal.

Matthew 18:8 (Mark 9:47)

**Study Help:** This passage is not to be taken literally – Jesus is not teaching the virtues of self-mutilation as a means of restraining our sinful passions. He is simply teaching that we must deal radically with sin because of its terrifying consequences.

# Man's Only Hope

We have come to the end of our study about man and reached some very solemn conclusions. The sin of Adam has reached the entire human race. Every man is a morally corrupt being, hostile toward God, and unwilling to submit to His will. All are capable of unspeakable sins and perversions, and are therefore worthy of the just condemnation of a holy and righteous God. The Scripture is clear - all men without exception stand condemned before God without excuse or alibi, and man can do nothing to change his circumstance or reconcile himself to God. This is a dreadful truth, but one that must be believed and accepted before we can begin to comprehend the great salvation that God has accomplished for His people through Jesus Christ.

1. The following Scriptures are a fitting conclusion for this study because they not only declare the solemn truth about our inability to save ourselves, but they also proclaim the great hope of salvation through the mercy of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Consider each Scripture and write out the solemn truth and great hope that is found in each.

a. Psalm 130:3-4:

*The Solemn Truth (v.3):*

*The Great Hope (v.4):*

b. Romans 3:19-22

*The Solemn Truth (v.19-20):*

*The Great Hope (v.21-22):*

c. Romans 7:24-25

*The Solemn Truth (v.24):*

*The Great Hope (v.25):*

d. Galatians 3:22

*The Solemn Truth:*

*The Great Hope:*