

# THE DEPTH OF DEPRAVITY

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This is written to the true child of God who has determined to believe the Word of God over his own assumptions and that of other men. For those who do not have the stomach for the truth do not read! I'll pray for your need! This may be one of the best theses that I've penned on the subject of the depth of man's depravity. Much of it is quotations from giants of days gone by. I take no credit for their expressions and am deeply grateful for their tremendous writings and handing down to me and all those who read their work. To the believer, I pray this will be a blessing but to those with weak stomachs don't say I did not warn you! The Depth of Human Depravity:

The Bible speaks of some sins and sinners as worse than others John 19:11; 1 Timothy 3:13. But the "best" sinner is far worse than what we think the "worst" sinner is. He is not only totally sinful in all his thoughts all the time Genesis 6:5, but nobody can plumb the depth of his depravity Jer. 17:9. It is only because of God's restraints in common grace that we do not murder each other. When God removes the restraints, we sin Rom. 1:24–28. That itself is a punishment. Sin is a punishment for sin.

We are all born with original sin. We are all natural-born sinners. This is the root of all thoughts and acts of sin. When a person becomes a Christian, he is forgiven all sin both original and actual. But the root is still there, even though it is counteracted by the indwelling Holy Spirit. This is why Christians still sin, sometimes committing even worse sins than before their conversion. It is only by the grace of the Spirit within us that we do not constantly sin as we used to do.

Spiritual death: Pelagianism says man is alive and well. Arminianism says man is sick. Calvinism says man is dead. The first two of these have more in common with each other than either has with the third, for a well man and a sick man is both still alive. Scripture repeatedly says that fallen man is spiritually dead Eph. 2:2; 5:14; Colossians 2:13; 1 Tim. 5:6; Rom. 6:13; Rev. 3:1. Our bodies are still alive but our souls are dead. Jonathan Edwards preached a powerful sermon on Matthew 23:37 with the thesis: "Wicked men's bodies are as it were the sepulchers of their souls." Abraham Kuyper compared fallen man to a mummy wrapped in self-righteousness concealing an ugly corpse. Rom. 3:13 says our mouths are like an open grave.

Christ raised people from the dead to show that lost sinners are spiritually dead and in need of spiritual resurrection. We are spiritual zombies parading to hell, as it was Eph. 2:1–3. A dead body can do nothing but rot and stink, John 11:39. So with a dead soul! It is as worms and maggots devour a cadaver in the grave Job 19:26; 21:26; 24:20, so sin eats away at all parts of a lost soul.

Fallen men are dead trees Jude 12 that deserve to be cut down and thrown into the fire Matt. 3:10; 7:19. They are useful only as firewood for hell. The lifeless stump of fallen man is rotten Job 13:28. Christopher Love the English Puritan said, "Man's heart by nature is a slaughterhouse to holy motions." Man is not drowning, but already drowned dead and his skeleton has been picked clean by sharks, said Edwin Palmer. Man is dead. The sinner is spiritually stillborn and unable to give birth to any good. Spurgeon once said, "You will remember while the sinner is dead in sin, he is alive so far as any opposition to God may be concerned." Conversely, the Christian is alive to righteousness and should reckon himself dead to sin Rom. 6:4–13.

Depravity and death: We sin because we are sinners. "Wickedness flows from the wicked" 1 Sam. 24:13. Original sin is the polluted fountain from which all individual sins flow. Since sin brings forth death James 1:15, we are born with spiritually dead souls and physically dying bodies. We are on a death march from womb to tomb.

Lost sinners dread death for unrighteous reasons. For one, they do not want an end to their life of sin. By contrast, Christians long to be free from "this body of death" Rom. 7:24. They long to be free from sin at last. Too many Christians, however, prefer to stay on earth and are only grudgingly willing to go to heaven, contrary to Paul's attitude in Philippians 1:21–23. We should desire to be free of sin, not just of death, pain, and tears Rev. 21:4.

In His wisdom, God does not free His children immediately from physical death or the presence of sin inside or around them. We must pray for godly patience to wait and to strive for holiness.

Death is the product of sin Rom. 6:23. For the unbeliever, death is the punishment he has earned. But for the Christian, while death is still "the last enemy" 1 Cor. 15:26, it has been transformed. On his deathbed, Thomas Goodwin the Puritan said, "Ah, is this dying? How I have dreaded as an enemy this smiling friend?" Death becomes the friend to escort us to God and a sinless eternity.

Earthy Illustrations: The Bible employs some earthly analogies to describe the depth of human depravity. Man is like snake venom Job 20:14; Rom. 3:13, putrefying sores oozing pus Isa. 1:5–6; Lev. 15:2; 1 Kings 8:38, gangrene 2 Tim. 2:17, a menstrual cloth Isa. 3:22; 64:6; Lam. 1:17, mud and dog's vomit 2 Peter 2:22, and scum and filthiness in a boiling pot Ezek. 29:11–12.

Fallen man is a maggot that feeds on filth and dead bodies Job 25:6. Even David confessed that he was a worm Psalm 22:6. John Calvin said fallen man is a "five-foot worm." Liberals and even naïve evangelicals have sometimes substituted sinner for worm in Isaac Watts' famous hymn, "Would He devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?" Men are worms whose hunger is never satisfied, as Jonathan Edwards said, "They are like a filthy worm that never feeds so sweetly as when feeding on carrion or never has its nature so suited as when crawling in the most abominable filth."

Philippians 3:8 uses the Greek word skubalon to describe the best, not the worst, of man's pretended righteousness. It means refuse, garbage, something that is thrown out. It sometimes means excrement. Thomas Watson the Puritan observed, "Some think sin is an ornament; it is rather an excrement." Calvin often said we are "dung and stench." Man is not a beautiful angel but a filthy and disgusting sinner.

Worse Than Animals: God created man lower than the angels Psalm 8:5 and higher than the animals Gen. 1:28; Lev. 24:21. But because of sin, man is worse than any beast. Animals do not sin; we do. Isa. 1:2–3 says oxen and donkeys are better than we are, for they know where to be fed by their masters but man does not. Chicks run to their mother hen, but sinners run from God Matt. 23:37.

The Bible often compares man with hogs 2 Peter 2:22. Thomas Watson said, "The sinner is a swine with a man's head," a kind of half-man half-beast like a centaur. George Whitefield popularized the analogy of man as half-beast and half-devil. Spurgeon said that analogy is an insult to beasts and devils. We are worse than both.

Scripture also compares sinners with dogs 2 Pet. 2:22; Philippians 3:2. This does not refer to cute puppies, but as Calvin said, "mean mangy dogs." Sinners are mad dogs foaming at the mouth with spiritual rabies. They are ravenous wolves, Matt. 7:15; John 10:12 and wild dogs, bulls and lions Ps. 22:12–16. Worse still, we are like disgusting vermin. Calvin said we are worse than "worms, flies, lice, and vermin. For there is more worth in all the world's vermin than there is in man." The worst, vilest animal is an angel compared with the best man.

Thomas Watson said man is worse than animals, for animals fear fire but sinners do not fear hellfire. Unless we are transformed into Christ's lambs, lost sinners are dogs that will be excluded from heaven Rev. 22:15.

Children of the Devil: What is more, sinners are called snakes Matt. 12:34; 23:33, for they are sons and daughters of Satan the great Serpent. They are a "brood of vipers" Matt. 3:7. Jesus said, "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you will do" John 8:44. Spurgeon aptly said that the pure image of God has been defaced and sinners now resemble Satan more than God. If you want to know what Satan looks like, look in the mirror. Examine your heart. There is enough sin in even the best sinner to reproduce another Devil.

Not all sinners are demon-possessed as such, but all are possessed by Satan as his willing slaves. Thomas Watson said we are "devils in the shape of men" and "devils covered over with flesh." Calvin said, "To hear us tell it, we are angels, but if someone looks closely, he will find we are worse than devils." Religion alone does not help, as Watson said: "A moralized man is but a tame devil."

Because we pass original sin on to our children, we beget further children of the Devil. This does not mean that Christians ought not to have children. But it serves as a wake-

up call to Christian parents to pray for the salvation of their little ones and not assume they are Christians because their parents are. Parents should realize their children are born sinners and need to be born again as Christians.

Lovers of Sin, Haters of God: Since the Fall, mankind has things upside down and backward. Instead of loving God Matt. 22:37 and hating sin Rom. 12:9, sinners love sin and hate God. They delight in abominations Isa. 66:3, drink sin like water Job 15:16 and love pleasure rather than God 1 Tim. 3:4. Ps. 52:3 says, "You love evil more than good." John 3:19 says, "Men loved darkness rather than light."

Conversely, sinners hate God precisely because God is God. They are "haters of God" Ps. 81:15; Rom. 1:30. Men would kill God if they could, but their arrows do not reach God's heart. Their nails hit Him at Calvary. The great Robert Murray M'Cheyne commented: "If the heart of God were within the reach of men, it would be stabbed a million times in one moment." Men hate God with as obsessive a compulsion to murder Him as Captain Ahab had to kill Moby Dick.

Man is the inveterate enemy of God. Calvin once said that even if God broke the arms of rebellious sinners, they would still kick against Him with their legs. Sinful man deserves divine wrath. Jonathan Edwards preached that there is a "mutual loathing" between God and man. Calvin said we deserve to have the angels spit on us. Sinners make God nauseous. Christ will vomit lukewarm hypocrites out of His mouth Rev. 3:16. Man is bad, very bad. And God is mad, very mad.

In spite of God's sober warnings and loving invitations, sinners refuse to repent, for that is an abomination to them Prov. 13:19. Thomas Watson said that sinners dare God to punish them and they sin so greedily as if they were afraid that hell's gates would be shut before they got there.

Ultra-environmentalists sometimes say that mankind is a disease on Mother Earth. They are more right than they realize. God cursed the cosmos because of Adam's sin Gen. 3:17; Rom. 8:20. Earth does not sin; we do. Our sin moves creation to want to vomit us out Lev. 18:25 and 28; 20:22.

Yet sinners delude themselves into thinking, "I'm not that bad." This is because, as Jer. 13:23 says, they are accustomed to their sins. Calvin said sinners do not detect their sin "just as a pig does not smell its own stink." Pelagians and Armenians would do well to heed Anselm's response to Boso: "You have not yet considered the exceeding gravity of sin."

If God removed the restraints, there is no end of the sin that even the best saint would commit. Remember David, Moses, and Peter. Spurgeon wisely warned: "No man knoweth what villainy he is capable of; he only needs to be placed under certain circumstances and he will develop into a very fiend."