

Man's Deficiency: Sinful Desires

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

Volume 21, [Nu 29](#) August 20, 2006GG

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But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. ([1Co 2:14](#))

Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have, if we pray unto him? ([Job 21:14-15](#))

We have examined fallen man's will, his disposition, his motives, and his abilities—or lack thereof. Before looking at the solution to the sin problem, we need to examine one more facet of sinful fallen man, his dominant desires. Many contemporary preachers teach their beliefs from the premise that man's natural disposition toward God and spiritual things is neutral. Thus it is no surprise that they view their preaching as something of a motivational speech to excite the audience's interest in embracing their view of the gospel. They wholly ignore the fundamental teaching of Scripture regarding the nature of sinful humanity. We desire things that appeal to us, things that we perceive that we need or want. Does Scripture in fact paint such an image of fallen sinful humanity?

From a rather broad array of passages that make the point I have chosen two to affirm the Biblical view of man in his unsaved state.

In the first passage man in his natural, sinful state, the "natural man," does not "receive" the things of the Spirit—spiritual things relating to God. Paul does not leave us in doubt as to why this is the case; "...for they are foolishness unto him." The word translated "foolishness" in this verse is a form of the Greek root for the English word moron, "moria." A person would consider it utterly absurd to embrace and believe as true something that he/she views as "moronic." Not only does this passage reject the idea that sinful man's intellectual and spiritual appetite is neutral, it strongly affirms that it is firmly bent against God. If you have never talked with an atheist or any entrenched unbeliever, you may have never been exposed to this profound hatred of anything related to God. The desires of the unsaved run counter not neutral to the ways of God. Such a person lives with an entrenched animosity toward God that will readily surface if given any opportunity.

The passage from [Job 21:14-15](#) appears in a rather specific and detailed description of the wicked, a description of a lifestyle that is set against God. If a contemporary motivational preacher were to preach his Sunday morning pep rally sermon to these folks, Job tells us precisely how the wicked would react to it. Desire for more knowledge regarding the ways of God is the last thing on their minds! The context describes them as saturated with concerns regarding prosperity and satisfaction of their personal appetite with God and His ways not to be seen in their minds.

It is rather difficult to separate motives and desires. One drives the other. We may not know a person's motives; typically we cannot know them despite our all too frequent claims of such knowledge. However when a person acts on his/her motives, we may observe conduct and know something of his/her desires. Students of human behavior often observe that the eye is the window to a person's soul, to the inner most thoughts. Watch a person's eyes as a variety of images cross the field of vision. You will observe occasional neutrality or disinterest, but more often you will either observe pleasure and desire or disgust and rejection. These two passages make it rather clear that when images of God pass before a wicked person the eyes will reflect disgust and rejection.

When David wrote in [Ps 10:4](#), "The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after

God: God is not in all his thoughts,” he clearly did not intend to say that the wicked never think about God. Both of our study verses and others affirm that the wicked indeed do think about God, but they also leave no doubt as to the nature of their thoughts about Him. We should view [Ps 10:4](#) as conveying that the wicked entertain no *favorable thoughts* about God. There is no thought in them to “...seek after God.” Why is the wicked so opposed to seeking after God? David affirms that the cause lies in man’s deep and sinful pride. For the wicked to truly seek after God he would have to acknowledge a need for God and confess a desire for God, neither of which he has any inclination to do.

When Paul addressed the qualifications of the ministry, he included a rather interesting point that relates to this question of pride, "Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil." (1 Timothy 3:6) Apparently pride is one of Satan’s primary weapons against the saints. One who is young or inexperienced in the faith lacks the seasoning and stability necessary to recognize this favorite ploy of Satan. A novice will often hold an exaggerated view of his personal abilities and character. He might even embrace grandiose plans for his ministry that, if truly successful, would be catastrophic to Satan and his objectives, but Satan knows well that instilled pride and an exaggerated view of one’s abilities will eventually defeat the novice in his plans. Pride predicts utter defeat, not grand success. Thus one of Paul’s primary qualifications for ministry requires that the man to be ordained is seasoned and humbled by life so as to be broken in himself and wholly dependent on God for grace and guidance. The man who is truly qualified for ministry understands that ministry is not “all about me,” “my ministry,” “my privileges” etc. in the office. A man’s ministry is divinely assigned, not sought out by the man, especially the man who seeks to see his own name in lights. Ordination does not entitle a man to preach or to otherwise minister. He serves under God and only is allowed to serve as he submits his whole life to God for his divine assignment.

It is something of an aside to this chapter, but the question of ministry and qualifications raised here needs to be emphasized continuously. There are some folks who demonstrate their refusal to submit to Scripture (Is pride their problem too?), but they nonetheless want to serve in church office as deacon or minister. When confronted with the qualifications that Paul set forth for both offices in the pastoral epistles, they openly suggest that no one today qualifies, so we might as well simply ignore these qualifications altogether. If people do not match the qualifications, and if they admittedly do not intend to submit to God by transforming their lives to these qualifications, they should not hold the office rather than disgracing it by continuing in it with obvious disqualifications.

Why should we hold to such a firm view of these qualifications? In [Eph 3:21](#) Paul affirmed that God would have glory in His church throughout all ages till the Second Coming. How can there be a true God-preserved church with no one qualified for the two official offices in it? I truly believe that no church is ever “murdered.” A church that dies commits suicide! When a group of people lose their vision of the New Testament church so wholly as to openly boast that they need not live according to its teachings and qualifications, they confess far more than they realize. Jesus confronted some folks who had a similar prideful view of their own sinful failures with a sobering warning.

"Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." ([Mt 21:43](#))

A person’s rejection of qualifications for office or of other New Testament teachings regarding the Lord’s church is not a predictor that God will not have His church in the world till the Second Coming. Far from it; such an acknowledgement rather reveals pride and a speedy removal of the blessings of the Lord’s church from a people who so openly reject their King!

Thus whether we are dealing with an inexperienced believer or the entrenched animosity of the wicked against God, pride is one of Satan’s favorite tools. Why should it not be so? Consider his amazing success in using it!

Paul's description of the wicked in Romans the third chapter (considered in an earlier chapter) repeatedly deals with sinful humanity's wicked desires. People do what gives them pleasure. Read again that description and ask yourself what kind of person would find pleasure in the abominable actions described in these verses. When you describe such a person, you are beginning to see the reality of the character of every human, at least in potential, apart from the grace of God.

As we develop the many facets of God's saving grace, we shall discover that when God saves a person, He instills a new character, with new appetites and new desires that incline the regenerate elect toward a different lifestyle. God's saving grace is not contained in an isolation chamber so that it has no impact on a saved person's desires and conduct. We cannot predict the degree to which a person will transform his/her life, but God's salvation teaches transformation. ([Tit 2:11-14](#)) New desires and appetites will to some degree alter the saved person's conduct.

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