

060806 Man's Condition after the Fall 21/27 August 6, 2006GG
Man's Condition after the Fall

Gospel Gleanings, "...especially the parchments"

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What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes. ([Ro 3:9-18](#))

Having considered man's state as God created him, we now move to the state of man after the fall. We initiated this study as we considered the impact of the fall on man's will, but we shall explore the question further.

Given Paul's emphasis throughout the Roman letter on "Jews and Gentiles," one could likely safely conclude that a significant tension existed between these two classes of people in the church at Rome, prompting Paul to write them in an effort to relieve the tension and get the church back on the right course. The Roman historian Suetonius mentioned an episode during the reign of Claudius Caesar in which Claudius expelled all Jews from the city of Rome because of a heated dispute among them regarding a man named "Crestus." Most Christian commentators who mention this episode believe it refers to the intense disagreement between Christian and non-Christian Jews regarding our Lord. [Ac 18:2](#) mentions this episode to explain why Aquila and Priscilla were in Corinth, not their home in Rome.

After his introduction to the Roman letter in the first chapter, Paul focuses his thoughts on the wrath of God revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth. The cultural focus of the sins that Paul mentions in this context might lead us to think that Paul primarily had reference to Gentiles. Then in the second chapter Paul specifically addresses Jews and their sins. Thus by the time Paul gets to the third chapter he has fully confronted the fact of human sin, both among Jews and Gentiles. "...we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" seems to refer us to the first two chapters of this letter.

At this point Paul gives us a rather intimate view of sin, but he does not focus his thoughts on culturally unique sins. He confronts the universal dominance of sin among humanity regardless of culture. Sin is a greater problem than the culture in which a person lives! The dominant culture may well predispose a person to certain sins, but the sin problem transcends culture and indicts every human being.

Paul begins the tenth verse of [Ro 3](#) with "As it is written." The rather vivid description of man's pervasive sinful condition is a series of quotations from Old Testament Scriptures. Paul used Old Testament Scripture exclusively to assault human pride and to pronounce both Jews and Gentiles alike as hardened criminals in all-out rebellion against our holy God.

Notice the universality of Paul's terms; "none," "They are all...," "They are together...," "There is none...." Culture, age, race, philosophy; nothing exempts fallen man from this sinful state. Other than those who are influenced by the teachings of Pelagius or others who hold to similar views, Christians have historically referred to this pervasive state of sin as "total depravity." Those who embrace Pelagius' ideas or similar beliefs will strongly object to the term and the idea of inherent and pervasive sin. Often they quip that the word "depravity" is never found in the Bible. However, notice Strong's definition of the word "wickedness" in [Ro 1:29](#).

1 depravity, iniquity, wickedness. 2 malice. 3 evil purposes and desires.44

The first term used to define this word is *depravity*. While the word may not appear in the Bible, clearly the idea does find solid support in Scripture.

Why do we need to study the depths of man's sinful state? Often people complain that this subject is depressing. It is never comfortable to look into one's personal closet and see what has been hidden safely away out of sight! When the prophet exhorted the people to "...look unto...the hole of the pit whence ye are digged" ([Isa 51:1](#)), he was referring to the origin of the Jewish nation in Abraham, a pagan Chaldean!

The intent of the term "total depravity" is not to convey that wicked people are as evil and sinful as they possibly can be, but rather that unsaved humans are alienated from God and fallen in every component of their being. Nothing in fallen man escaped the impact of the fall, including man's will, as we examined in the last chapter. Paul's intent in our study passage seems to be an illustration of the conduct that pervasive human depravity causes.

Whether we consider Andrew Fuller's quasi-Arminian "duty faith" idea that unsaved humans have a duty to believe the gospel and exercise faith in Christ, or the wholly Arminian view that man, not God, must accomplish salvation, we create an impossibility for unsaved man. It should be noted that Fuller repeatedly and emphatically taught that man's salvation was conditional on belief of the gospel, making his views truly quasi-Arminian. Whether one holds that belief of and obedience to the gospel is the direct cause of salvation or simply the instrument of salvation, both two views run headlong into the problem of man's depravity in his unsaved state. How can a person whose state of being matches Paul's description in our study verses possibly "believe" the gospel and exercise faith in Jesus as his/her Savior? Paul repeatedly emphasized that unsaved, depraved humans do not, will not and—in other passages such as 1 Corinthians 2:9-16—*cannot* embrace or believe the spiritual realities of God's grace. To require unsaved humans to respond in faith to the gospel prior to their new birth, or regeneration, is to demand the impossible of them.

Jesus corroborated this truth in His dialogue with Nicodemus ([Joh 3:1-10](#)) by telling Nicodemus that a man must first be born again, literally born from above—of God—*before* he has the ability either to see or to enter the kingdom of God. The logical point that Jesus made in this lesson affirms that, prior to the new birth, a person lacks the ability to either see or to enter God's kingdom, to function in any way spiritually pleasing to God. For any system of theology to require any condition of unregenerate humans creates an impossible condition. They cannot perform it; they lack the ability, not to mention the inclination, to do so.

The prevailing view of man's fallen and unsaved state, and the prevailing view of the action necessary for man to correct his problem is that God gives man a "fresh start," a "new beginning," the opportunity to start over and do better. Thus these views utterly ignore and reject the profound depth of man's fallen state. Sinful man's condition requires far more than a fresh start to resolve his sin problem. Adam had a "new beginning" in the Garden of Eden in a perfect world. What did he do with his opportunity? If Adam failed in such an ideal state, what makes anyone think they can truly remedy their fallen and sinful condition in the present world?

What are the implications of man's depravity to our theological beliefs? To our view of how a man is saved? We cannot frame a Biblical and correct view of salvation until we have first come to terms with the profound and pervasive impact that sin has on all of humanity. Once we come to terms with man's true condition after the fall, we clearly see that man's only hope for salvation lies in God alone. Man lacks both the ability and the inclination to do anything, mental or physical, to reverse his condition.

Paul dealt with this impossibility when he described our unsaved state as being "dead in trespasses and

sins” ([Eph 2:1-10](#)). Requiring a dead person to do something is as sensible and logical as requiring an unregenerate person to do something either to complete or to accomplish his/her salvation. Paul could have described us in our unsaved state as being asleep, as being out of touch with our spiritual reality, or any number of other less severe conditions. However, he chose the analogy of “*dead* in trespasses and sins” by the direction and inspiration of the Holy Spirit for good cause. The person whose moral and spiritual state matches Paul’s description in our study verses is a spiritually dead person! He is quite active and alive in terms of human life, and most definitely alive to sinful human passions and conduct, but he is dead to spiritual reality and to any ability or inclination toward God. He views God and spiritual matters as “foolishness,” not as something to be believed and embraced as good and true.

Thus our eternal salvation must be by God’s grace alone. Nothing else can save!

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