



“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,” Romans 3:23.

Satan and Human Depravity

Lesson Aim: To study Articles 4 and 5 of our Doctrinal Statement.

L315. Date: October 1969. **Text:** Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12-15; I Peter 5:8. **Topic:** Depravity: Of Man; Doctrine: Studies In; Satan.

INTRODUCTION—The last and crowning act of God's creative work was the creation of human life. God made man in His own image and likeness and put him in the beautiful Garden of Eden to master things under his Heavenly Father's sovereign care.

Man's life in Eden was ideal. The book of Genesis testifies that there he enjoyed conscious existence (2:8), companionship (1:27; 2:18, 21-22), occupation (2:15), food (1:29-30; 2:16), water (2:10-14), entertainment (2:19-20), and religious experience (3:8).

But suddenly tragedy fell! Man was thrust out of the Garden with no possibility of return. His fellowship with God was broken. His readily available supply of food was cut off. Physical death hung over him as a continual threat to existence. What happened? The answer to this question is found in today's study.

This study takes another forward step in recounting the redemptive work of God in the world. It also considers two further statements of doctrine which we hold. (1) We believe in the existence and activity of a personal devil. (2) We believe in the hereditary and total depravity of man in his natural state involving his fall in Adam. Today's study will survey these two doctrines.

But, praise the Lord, we also believe the Lord Jesus Christ is a Saviour who is able to deliver men from sin and overthrow the works of the devil! This is the good news of the Gospel which is proclaimed in the Holy Bible.

EXPOSITION

I. SATAN, I Peter 5:8.

“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour,” I Peter 5-8.

All in this world that is good, honorable and holy is headed up in a person of supreme good whom we call God. This was a point of emphasis in last week's lesson. All in this world that is evil, degrading and unholy is headed up in a person of supreme evil whom we call Satan. This is a point of emphasis in this week's lesson.

1. Origin.—Where did the devil come from! The Bible does not go into detail in answer to this question but makes two truths emphatic. (1) Satan is a created being, **“For by him (God) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him,”** Colossians 1:16. God only has immortality (endless existence), I Timothy 6:16. Therefore, all things other than God were created, Satan was either created or he, with God, has endless existence. The answer is obvious.

(2) Satan was not created an evil person. Everything God made was “very good,” Genesis 1:31. A devil could hardly be called “good.” Scripture passages such as Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:1-19 suggest that an angelic creature became filled with pride because of his beauty and power. He resolved to be like God. In consequence of his sin of pride and rebellion, he was cast down, degraded in person, position, and power. Hence he became the opponent of God and man. This accounts for the existence of such an evil personage in the world today.

2. Nature.—Satan is a person. This means he has intelligence, will, and power of moral discernment. Nowhere in the Bible is he referred to as an impersonal force. Neither is he personified as the principle of evil. He is referred to by personal names, personal pronouns are used to refer to him, and personal acts are ascribed to him. (See Job 1:6-12; Matthew 4:1-11; I Peter 5:8; Revelation 20:1-3; et, al). The Bible speaks of his work, power, thought and designs as arising from personality.

Satan is a person of evil. He was a sinner from the beginning, I John 3:8. He is the head of all powers of darkness and ignorance, Ephesians 6:10-12. He sows tares among the wheat and is the enemy and accuser of Christians, Revelation 12:5. He seeks to devour men, I Peter 5:8. He controls fallen angels and fallen men, John 8:44; I John 3:8-10; Revelation 12:7-12.

3. Activity.—Satan is the author of sin (Genesis 3:1-6), sickness (Luke

13:16), and death (Hebrews 2:14). He enters into men (John 13:27), blinding their heart (II Corinthians 4:4), and putting wicked purposes in them (John 13:2; Acts 5:3). He tempts men to sin (Matthew 4). He opposes the influence of the Gospel (Mark 4:15) by harassing and resisting God's servants (Daniel 10:13; II Corinthians 12:7), hindering them (I Thessalonians 2:18), sifting them (Luke 22:31), and accusing them (Revelation 12:9-10). He seeks to infiltrate good with evil (Matthew 13:25) and transforms himself and his ministers into angels of light (II Corinthians 13:25). He is unceasingly active in efforts to thwart the purposes of God and wreck havoc upon men.

4. Limitation.—Satan has great power but he does not have all power. He exists and operates only by the permissive will of God. He cannot touch a believer unless God permits it, Job 1-2. He is a coward and flees when resisted in the name of Jesus because he does not have power to stand against Him, James 4:7. One day God will cancel all his power and he will be so helpless one angel will cast him into the bottomless pit, Revelation 20:1-3. Don't be afraid to resist him. Jesus gives victory!

5. Future.—Satan does not have a very promising future. The Lord Jesus has come to give victory over him. **“For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil,”** I John 3:8. Through death Jesus was able to assure the destruction of “him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,” and deliver men from the fear of death, Hebrews 2:14-15. Satan is already a defeated foe and he knows it. During the Millennium he will be bound and kept in the bottomless pit, Revelation 20:1-3. Then he will be loosed for a little period, Revelation 20:7-9. Finally, he will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, to eternal punishment. His doom is certain. That is why he is so fierce today. Don't let him take you to hell with him. Be sure you are trusting Jesus today!

II. SINNER, Genesis 3:1-7.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned,”
Romans 5:12.

This is a somber statement to make concerning mankind. For man was made in the “image and likeness of God,” Genesis 1:26-27. From the condition of divine personality and holiness, man fell into a state called “Depravity.” We believe in the “hereditary and total depravity” of all mankind.

1. Meaning of depravity.—There is much misunderstanding of this doctrine. The following positive and negative statements should make its

meaning clear. Hereditary and total depravity does not mean that every man is as wicked as he can get; that sinners do not have a conscience; that every person will engage in every form of sin; that the sinner is incapable of doing anything good; nor that infants are born already condemned in sin and bound for hell. Positively, no!

Hereditary and total depravity means that corruption extends to every part of man's nature—mental, emotional, volitional, and physical; that there is nothing in man which can make him righteous before God or obligate God to make him righteous; and that every member of the human race suffers under the same infirmity and inability. In the place of a bent toward God there is in every man a fearful bent toward evil.

2. The extent of depravity.—We believe in the “total” depravity of man. This simply means that every aspect of man, physical and spiritual, is deficient because of his inherited nature. It means each person is destitute of that love to God which the law demands; guilty of elevating some lower affection or desire above regard for God; determined in all of life by a preference to self rather than God; possessed by an aversion to God which is evident in self-will conflict with God's will; disordered in every faculty; capable of no thought, emotion or act which is absolutely holy; and unable to stop his constant progress into further depravity.

Dr. J. P. McBeth has a masterful discussion of this subject in his booklet entitled “The Fall of Nature and Human Nature.” He points out what depravity actually means.

In the fall of man, the body became depraved. It was subjected to death, sickness, pain, old age, and eventually will turn to dust.

Personality fell also. (1) The mind was darkened. It turned from genius to ignorance, from carnal to spiritual; it became susceptible to error; pure reason became mixed with fallacy; slow to believe; it became quick to doubt. (2) The emotions were also perverted. Love turned to hate; a capacity to love wrong and despise good arose. (3) Even the will fell so that it became rebellions against God.

The soul of man fell too. Made in the image and likeness of God—even sharing His holiness—man became capable of sin. The soul became carnal, sensual, rebellious. Lured by sin it engaged in a spiritual warfare against God.

So the totality of man's nature—mental, emotional, volitional, physical, and spiritual—fell and became depraved.

3. The scope of depravity.—Depravity is hereditary. It is a part of our human nature received from our parents. Our human nature is a depraved nature. This is true of every person you know.

The Bible expresses it in these words: “. . . **By one man's disobedience many were made sinners. . .**” Romans 5:19. It says we are “by nature” the children of wrath just like everyone else, Ephesians 2:3. It testifies, “**For in Thy sight no man living is righteous,**” Psalm 143:2. And again, “**For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,**” Romans 3:23.

4. The cause of depravity.—Look back to the solemn account recorded in Genesis 3. The sin of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the Garden of Eden began it all. Satan appealed to Eve (and through her to her husband) and enticed her to eat of the tree of which God said, “. . . **Thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die,**” Genesis 2:17. But they both ate and were cut off from the tree of life, the garden of Eden, and the presence of God. This experience tragically changed man's nature. He was depraved through experience of sin and exclusion from God. This nature he passed on to his children and they to their children. Until one day it was passed on to you and me. We cannot change the nature with which we were born. But there is One who can change it for us.

5. The cure of depravity.—The old depraved nature cannot be changed. It must be exchanged for a new nature. The Holy Spirit makes it clear that Christ Jesus alone is able to counteract the evil of the old nature by the implantation of a new nature.

When a person trusts Jesus as Saviour; he is “born again” by the Spirit, John 3. He becomes “a new creation” in Christ Jesus, II Corinthians 5:17. Jesus saves from the penalty of sin when one trusts Him; from the power of sin as one lives with Him; and from the presence of sin when He takes us to be with Him in heaven. Blessed cure!

III. SAVIOUR, Romans 5:12-15.

“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous,” Romans 5:18-20.

1. Man's need.—Each member of the human race is in desperate need. Through the wiles of Satan, his predecessors fell into sin. As a consequence their nature became depraved. This depravity warped the totality of their nature in the direction of sin. In turn, since depravity was a part of their nature it was passed on to their descendants. Therefore each person you meet today labors under the bondage of a depraved and sinful nature.

Man's depraved manner of thinking declines to depend solely upon God

for mercy and deliverance. Each man wants to do something to merit salvation. But so serious is the stain of depravity that the best “righteousness” of which man is capable becomes “filthy rags” when presented to God as a meritorious offering, Isaiah 64:6. Man desperately needs help to deliver him from his sin.

2. God's grace.—Here is where the grace of God comes into glorious view. It announces that God is for us even though we are against Him. He is for us, not just in a general way, but in specific acts of redemption. He came to sinners not as a destroyer but as a deliverer!

So it is written, “. . . **where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. . .**” Romans 5:20. The believing sinner is “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24) because “the gift by grace” (Romans 5:15) is “eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,” Romans 6:23. So widespread is His mercy that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,” Titus 2:11. We are “justified by his grace,” Titus 3:7. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound!

3. Christ's atonement.—It is evident that Christ Jesus did something upon which our salvation depends. It is called giving “his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45) or, being “made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13), or, “the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26). The student of the Scriptures soon learns that it was the death of Christ that constituted His redemptive deed. In that death He took upon Himself the penalty of our sins and bore it to the bitter end, even death, Isaiah 53:1-12.

Read Romans 5 noting verses 6, 8, and 10 have a recurring statement: **“Christ died for the ungodly . . . Christ died for us . . . we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”** Second Corinthians 5:21 shows the element of substitution in His death: Christ, who knew no sin, became a sin offering for us who were guilty sinners.

The death of the Lord Jesus is effective! Paul writes of Him as the one, **“In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace,”** Ephesians 1:7.

And so it all ties together. (1) A humanity whose stain by sin was complete and irremedial; (2) a God whose mercy and redeeming love was incomprehensible; (3) a Saviour whose death was eternally effective. Put them together, mix with penitent faith, and you have redemption needed, provided and applied to the good of men and the glory of God. Are you rejoicing in the benefits of applied grace?

4, Salvation's scope.—Salvation includes the totality of man. (1) His spirit is saved the moment he trusts Jesus. That phase of salvation is eternally complete and secure. (2) His life is saved as he lives day by day in

fellowship with the risen Christ and makes his life count for the Lord Jesus. (3) His body will be saved when the Lord Jesus comes again to call dead believers from the graves in their glorified resurrection bodies which are fitted for heaven. And all this was included in what Jesus did for us when He died for us and rose again.

Salvation is, therefore, past and present and future. (1) Occasionally the Bible will speak of salvation of the soul and thus refer to “us who are saved” as in I Corinthians 1:18. (2) Occasionally the Bible will speak of salvation of the life and so refer to our being saved “if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you,” I Corinthians 15:2. (3) Occasionally the Bible will speak of ultimate salvation when the body is resurrected and then it is a “salvation ready to be revealed in the last time,” I Peter 1:5. But all this was included in what Jesus obtained for us in His atonement.

Salvation is concerned with a two-fold goal: the good of men and the glory of God, But since that which is good for men always glorifies God, we can say it becomes one great project—to glorify God. God intends to “bring many sons unto glory,” Hebrews 2:10. He does this by saving them. And in the gracious salvation of wicked sinners His grace and love is magnified to His glory.

Have you ever looked carefully in the Scriptures for a specific purpose as to why God saved you? If your search is the same as mine, you will end up at Ephesians 1:12. It reads, **“That we should be to the praise of his glory. . .”** Is God being glorified in your life because you trust Jesus?

CONCLUSION—Today's study has set forth a very solemn doctrine. There is a person of supreme evil called the devil or Satan, who heads up all opposition to God and good. He entered human experience and enticed our first parents to sin. Through them we all received a nature which is warped in the direction of sin, which will commit sins when it comes to the age of responsibility, and which must be redeemed to go to heaven.

But God is a God of grace. He loved us when we were “unlovely. He sent the Lord Jesus to die for us that we might be saved. Though we deserved it not, He gave heaven's best for earth's worst. And thus men are made safe from death and hell.