

The Doctrines of Grace

Doctrine 2- The Radical Ruination of Man

Part B/Lesson 3 of 4

Man after the Fall- Moral Inability

Genesis 37:3&4

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

4 His 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.

John 6:44

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Romans 8:6-8

6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace,

7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*,

8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

Now that we have looked at "Spiritual Death" (Lesson 2)- we can see that the Fall of Man in the Garden was much worse than we previously may have thought. Indeed- Man is now utterly separated from his Maker- but, as we have seen, The Fall also brought about Spiritual Death as well.

But now we need to look at another even more horrible result of The Fall and that is what Theologians call, "Moral Inability". This Doctrine teaches that fallen Man is completely *unable* to love or serve God by and through his own volition or human effort- absent a Sovereign and gracious intervening by God the Holy Spirit.

Unable and Responsible

Many people in the modern Church struggle over reconciling the Truth of Moral Inability with another Biblical Truth that teaches that fallen Man is fully accountable to God for all of his actions and thoughts.

2Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

The Bible clearly teaches that we all are responsible for what we think, what we believe, what we say, and what we do. And the Bible is clear that God is Correct and Right to judge Man when he sins. The Justness of God (Doctrine 1) will not permit God to allow one single sin to go unpunished. God will judge all sin- either on the Cross in Salvation or in Hell through Eternal Damnation.

And yet while it is true that the Bible teaches that Man is held fully responsible for what he does here on the earth- the Bible also teaches that fallen Man is completely *unable* to love and serve God on his own. These two Biblical Truths are not contradictory- but they do require that we ponder them from Scripture (and not our own human logic) in order to reconcile them in our minds.

If fallen Man did not love and serve God because he lacked the *mental faculties* to do so- then God would be unjust to hold Man accountable. In that scenario- Man would be a helpless *victim*. But that is not the case with fallen Man.

The inability that all lost and unsaved people possess is "moral" and not "mental", and this "Moral Inability" is the result of fallen Man's *natural* and *normal* hostility toward God and the things of God. In other words- fallen Man is *unable* to love and serve God because he hates God.

Fallen Man is Unable Because He is Unwilling

As we studied previously- lost and unsaved people naturally and normally disdain God's Commands; they view God, and the things of God, with utter contempt, and see them as patently ridiculous.

1Corinthians 2:14a

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him...

The Greek word that the Apostle Paul used here that was translated into the phrase "does not" relates to our "desire" and "will". So Paul is teaching that Fallen Man *voluntarily* chooses, he *willfully* desires, he naturally and normally *does not accept the things of the Spirit of God*. Why? Because in his fallen State- Man sees God and the things of God as being "**foolishness**".

And as we have already studied- the English word "**foolishness**" comes from the Greek word which means: *something so utterly absurd or patently ridiculous as to deserve nothing but scorn; ridicule; or utter contempt*.

So by virtue of their completely ruined nature- *all* lost people hold God and the things of God in utter contempt. And this voluntary choice by fallen Man to disdain and reject the things of the Spirit of God does not end there- but it results in a "Moral Inability":

1Corinthians 2:14b

... and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

And the word that was translated here into English in the second part of **1 Corinthians 2:14** as “cannot” comes from the Greek word “*doulos*”, which means: *power or ability*.

So what Paul is actually teaching here is that Man’s normal and natural “desire” and “will” to hold God and the things of God in utter contempt results in Man being *unable* to love and serve God, and unable – in his own power and strength- to even correct this problem. So fallen Man’s devastated “will” brings about a “Moral Inability”.

The Fall of Adam in the Garden resulted in a radical and negative transformation of Man’s “will”, his “desires”, his “loves”, and his “wants”. All of those aspects of Adam’s “being” were immediately ruined when he sinned so that now- instead of loving and following after God- Man now *naturally* and *normally* despises God and seeks to rebel against Him. All of Man’s “choices” are thus ruined because human beings *always* choose what they love, want, or desire.

So while it is true that fallen Man chooses things all the time- he will *never* choose God, or the things of God, because Man no longer loves, desires, or wants God. So Fallen Man chooses exactly what he wants- sin and self. And we all inherit that ruined nature (and those wicked choices) at the very moment of conception through the seed of the father.

But, as bad as that is- what is even worse is that this normal inclination to hate God doesn’t simply rest by itself- but it, in turn, infects our human ability and power so that fallen Man is now *unable* to correct this problem. So our *willful* and *voluntary* hatred of God results in our *moral inability* to love and serve God- by and through our own human efforts. Fallen Man is now completely *unable* to please God precisely because he does not hold the Glory and the Pleasure of God to be a worthy goal.

Romans 8:8

So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

Again, the term “**in the flesh**” that the Apostle Paul uses here does *not* refer to saved people who are not as “spiritual” as they should be. but it refers only to *unsaved* people who are naturally and normally motivated and led by their fallen and sinful carnal lusts rather than the indwelling Spirit of God. And the Apostle teaches here that these fallen and unsaved people *cannot* please God- they do not possess the *power* or the *ability* to please God- no matter what they do.

So the correct way to look at this situation is to see Fallen Man as a *culprit* rather than as a *victim*. Man *cannot*- only because he *will not*. His radical and negative ruination is so enormous that- left to himself- Man would rather perish in eternal damnation than acknowledge God to be God, and submit himself to God’s Sovereign Authority. So we would also be correct to see “Moral Inability” to also be “Willful Hostility”.

Another Biblical illustration of how Man’s corrupt and fallen “will” affects his ability and power is shown in the life of Joseph and his brothers.

Genesis 37:3&4

3 Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic.

4 His 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.

Notice carefully what Moses wrote in the last part of verse 4:

(The brothers of Joseph) could not speak to him on friendly terms.

So Joseph's brothers were *unable*; they did not possess the *ability* or the *power* to speak to Joseph **on friendly terms**. The Bible says that they "**could not**". Now notice that this inability was *not* the result of any *physical* limitation on their part- they certainly had a mouth and were able to speak.

But notice *why* the Bible says Joseph's brothers were unable to speak to him on friendly terms:

His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him ...

The Bible teaches that Joseph's brothers were not *able* to speak to him on friendly terms because of their vicious hatred toward him. So the hatred that Joseph's brothers had toward him was so great and so all-encompassing that it *ruined* their ability to act in any way contrary to that hatred. This is a natural example of the spiritual Truth about Moral Inability. Fallen Man's natural and normal hatred toward God ruins his ability to love and serve God.

And so, absent a Sovereign and gracious intervention by God the Holy Spirit- no human being would ever love or serve God voluntarily- precisely because- in his fallen State- Man's normal disposition toward God is abject hatred, and Man *cannot* act in any way contrary to his *will*. Once again- Fallen Man *cannot* love and serve God- because he *wills not to*.

Man's "Will" is an Expression of His "Nature"

Matthew 7:16-20

16 "You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?"

17 "So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 "A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

19 "Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

20 "So then, you will know them by their fruits.

It is true that we make choices all the time. Even lost and unsaved people make choices. That is not debatable- it is a fact of human nature. Human beings

have the ability to choose. But the question that we need to ask is, *"Why do we choose what we choose?"* Do our choices simply spring up by themselves without any other mitigating factors involved, or are there other factors at work on which our choices are based?

So the issue that we need to carefully examine is- *"Are our choices "free"?"* And by using the word "free" to describe human choices- what is commonly meant is that our choices are unencumbered by any other factors; that they are uninfluenced and neutral in their make- up. So a word that is used to understand what people mean when they say "free" is the word "autonomous", which means: *self-ruled or self-governed*.

So to say human choices are "free" or "autonomous" means that our choices are completely unaffected or unhindered or uninfluenced by any other mitigating factors- that our choices simply spring up by themselves and are based on nothing- and that is simply not true. Our choices rest atop something else.

So while the Bible absolutely does teach that both lost and saved humans can and do make choices all the time (and it also teaches that we are held accountable by God for the choices that we make)- the Bible is also very careful to teach that those choices are not "free"; they are not "autonomous"- our choices are indeed affected and influenced and governed by other mitigating factors.

In fact, the Scriptures teach that our choices are in absolute accord with those other mitigating factors. So why do we choose what we choose? We choose what we love, we choose what we want, and we choose what we desire. So Man's choices are predicated on what he loves and what he wants and what he desires.

In other words- it is an absolute fact that Man can choose. But it is also an absolute fact that Man can *only* choose what he loves or what he wants or what he desires, and Man *cannot*, and Man *will not*, ever choose anything *contrary* to those loves, desires, or wants.

So since that is true- that brings up another question: *"Why does Man love what he loves? Why does Man want what he wants? Why does Man desire what he desires?"*

Why do *some* people desire to love and serve God while others do not desire that? Why do some people love God while others do not? Why do some people want to obey God while others couldn't care less?

And the normal answer would be, *"People desire to love and serve God because they are saved, and God has given them a new heart, and that love is part of that new heart"*. And that answer is absolutely true- the Bible does indeed teach that. But that answers only explains why people who are already saved love and serve God.

The more important question is, *"How do spiritually dead people, who are morally unable to love and serve God, people who normally and naturally are hostile towards God, people who love darkness rather than light, people who are by nature children of wrath, people who view God and the things of God to be patently absurd- how do you get people like that to suddenly choose to love and serve God?"* In other words- how do you get lost people to suddenly escape their own fallen nature and

voluntarily choose to believe the Gospel, repent of their sins, and trust in Christ for Salvation?

If people only choose what they love, and if lost people do not love God- how do you get those people to suddenly begin to love God so they will choose God?

And there are only two possible answers to that question:

- A. Those who suddenly desire to love and serve God do so because they possess some internal "goodness" or "righteousness" in themselves that they voluntarily act on
- B. Those who suddenly desire to love and serve God do so because God has Sovereignly and graciously enabled and empowered them to do so, and their desire is simply a "response" to what God has done for them.

And if Answer "A" is correct, then Man is not as fallen as the Bible says that he is because if what the Bible teaches about the condition of fallen Man is true- then no human being possess what he needs to suddenly begin to voluntarily and willfully love and serve God.

So why does Fallen Man love what he loves? Because his loves, wants, and desires are the result of his *nature*. And the nature of fallen Man is corrupt and sinful and radically ruined.

So here is how to understand this. All human beings have the ability and the power to choose. But those choices are not "free", they are not "autonomous", but Man's choices are based on what he loves, and what he desires, and what he wants. But we can't stop there.

Because *why* does fallen Man love what he loves? Man loves what he loves because his "loves" and his "desires" and his "wants" are the result or the product of his nature. And as we have already studied- the nature of all lost people has been radically ruined by The Fall.

So in reality the problem with fallen Man is not his "choices" or even his "loves"- but rather his "nature". And while we can *temporarily* and *artificially* modify our choices and loves- we cannot change our own natures.

The nature of saved people has been "saved" and "redeemed" and "altered" and "brought back" to its original condition that Man had *before* The Fall. And this "new nature" is described by various Biblical writers in various ways. The Apostle Paul termed it a "new creature" or "new creation".

2Corinthians 5:17

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, *he is* a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.

The Apostle Peter described this new nature as a "divine nature":

2Peter 1:4

For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of *the* divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

While the Apostle John used the term "God's seed".

1John 3:9

No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

Man's Will is an Expression of his Nature

So the issue is: Does the Bible teach that Man's Will is an expression of his nature? Yes it does. And to prove that- we need to carefully examine our text from **Matthew 7** very closely.

Matthew 7:16

You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they?

Notice here that Jesus says that the "nature" of a tree is known by the fruit it bears. In the same way- the true "nature" of Man is correctly revealed by how he lives his daily life- by what he actually does- by the "fruit" of his life- and *not* by what he *says* or *confesses*.

Matthew 7:17&18

17 So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.

18 A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit.

Notice here that our Lord said that there is a direct and unarguable connection between the "nature" of a tree and the "fruit" that it bears. And this natural illustration was meant to bring out the spiritual Truth that a corrupt "nature" can *only* produce corrupt "fruit".

Again, notice the word "**cannot**" that Jesus used in verse 18. This word always denotes "power" or "ability"- never "desire" or "will". Jesus teaches here that a corrupt tree (a lost person with a fallen nature) *cannot* (does not have the power or the ability) produce good fruit.

So what Jesus is teaching here is that no lost person can suddenly begin to love and serve God on his own simply by making a "freewill" choice to do so. And this "good fruit" example includes things like "hear the Gospel", believe the Gospel", "repent of sin", and "trust in Christ". The fallen nature of a lost person will not permit him to make such "good" choices- unless and until God the Holy Spirit Sovereignly comes to that individual and transforms his nature. This Sovereign and Gracious transformation of the Human Nature (from fallen to Divine) so that it

is both able and willing to bring forth good fruit (hear, believe, repent, and trust) is called "Regeneration".

Regeneration is the Sovereign Act of God- whereby He Graciously gives Spiritual Life to otherwise dead and fallen individuals so they may have both the "will" and the "power" to hear and believe the Gospel, repent of their sins, and trust in the finished Work of Christ for Salvation.

Philippians 2:13

for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure.

When the Apostle Paul wrote the phrase "**it is God who is at work in you**" here- he used it in an "exclusive" sense- meaning that it is God Alone- Who Sovereignly is at work inside you- without you first asking Him to do so, and without you cooperating with Him in this Work.

The Fall of Man was so devastating to us all that God must Sovereignly and Graciously provide both the "will" and the "power" to do of His Good Pleasure (hear and believe the Gospel, repent of their sins, and trust in the finished Work of Christ for Salvation) through Regeneration- because left to themselves and their corrupt nature- no lost person would ever voluntarily choose this for themselves.

What Happens First?

But now notice the *timing* of this wondrous event of Regeneration. What happens first? Do bad trees suddenly begin to bear good fruit, and the bearing of that good fruit then somehow changes the nature of the tree, or does the nature of the tree have to change first in order for the tree to bear good fruit?

In other words- does good fruit come first or does the transformation of the nature come first? Jesus teaches in **Matthew 7** that because a bad tree *cannot* bear good fruit- the transformation of the "nature" of the tree from "bad" to "good" must happen first. Then that newly transformed "nature" is both able and willing to bring forth "good fruit".

So before any lost human being can have either the desire or the ability to love and serve God- God must first Sovereignly (all by Himself) and Graciously (unearned) and Supernaturally transform the human nature from "fallen" to "divine". The statement that Theologians use to illustrate this is:

Regeneration precedes Justification

Dead Man must be given Spiritual Life before he can possess either the will or the power to be saved. And so the Sovereign, Gracious, and Supernatural transformation of the human "nature" from fallen to Divine must come *before* that individual can hear and understand and believe the Gospel, before he can repent of his sins, and before he can trust in Christ for Salvation. In other words- the "nature" of the tree must be sovereignly and supernaturally transformed from "bad" to "good" *first- before* the tree can bring forth any "good fruit".

Through our "Spiritual Death" and our "Moral Inability"- in The Fall- Mankind lost both the "will" and the "power" to do of God's Good Pleasure. And so if God doesn't Sovereignly and Graciously give us new Spiritual Life and new Moral Ability *first*- nobody would ever even desire to be saved. That is how devastating The Fall was on us.

What Man Cannot Do

The Bible teaches that there are at least six other aspects about Fallen Man that illustrate "Moral Inability". These are things that Man *cannot* do in and of himself because of his fallen condition:

1. Fallen Man Cannot Love God (**Romans 1:30; 5:10**)
2. Fallen Man Cannot Know the Things of God (**1Corinthians 2:14; Job 21:14&15; Romans 1:18; 1:21-32**)
3. Fallen Man Cannot Obey or Please God (**Romans 8:7&8**)
4. Fallen Man Cannot Seek After God (**Romans 1:18; Romans 3:11; John 3:19&20; 6:44, 45&65**)
5. Fallen Man Cannot Change His Condition (**Job 14:4; Jeremiah 2:22; Jeremiah 13:23**)
6. Fallen Man Cannot Come to Jesus for Salvation Unless the Father Draws Him (**John 6:35-65**)

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

Recap of Lesson 3

1. Explain what **2Corinthians 5:10** means: _____

2. Reconcile the Truth of **2Corinthians 5:10** with what **Romans 8:6-8** teaches. _____

3. Explain the correlation between the phrase, “**does not**” and the word “**cannot**” in **1Corinthians 2:14**. _____

4. Explain what the phrase, “Man is Unable Because He is Unwilling” means: _____

5. What caused the brothers of Joseph to be *unable* to “**speak to him on friendly terms**”? _____
6. Are human beings (saved or lost) have the ability to choose? _____
7. Are those Choices “free” (autonomous)? _____
8. Why or why not? _____
9. On what are our choices based? _____
10. Why do we love what we love? _____
11. What kind of nature do lost and unsaved people have? _____
12. Can Man change his own nature? _____
13. What kind of nature do saved people have? _____
14. What did the various Biblical writers call this? _____
15. What does the new nature do to our loves; desires; and wants? _____

16. What does that do to our choices? _____

17. So in reality- the problem with Man is not his choices or even his loves- but his

18. What was Jesus teaching in **Matthew 7:17&18**? _____

19. What is Regeneration? _____

20. When does Regeneration occur? _____

21. How does it occur? _____

22. According to the Bible- what else is Fallen Man unable to do? _____

Bonus Questions:

What might be some reasons why more people don't believe or teach Moral Inability? _____

What was your understanding of "Human Free Will" before this Class? _____

How has that view changed through this Study? _____

