

LD 3 (8) Rom. 3:10-12; John 3:1-8 How Bad is our Corruption? I. Unable to do Good II. Inclined towards Evil III. Unless!

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how bad or how deep does our corruption go? When you have a cavity, the dentist must drill until he reaches the bottom of the problem. All of the corruption must be removed in order to stop the spread and decay. Well, today we are going to find not only the depth of our corruption but also the only source of hope. Today we are going to be focusing on good work. This morning we are going to consider why we can't do good works until we are born again. Tonight, we will see the necessity of good works- how those who are born again must do them. So we start by seeing how we are not able to do good in and of ourselves. We consider this theme: Jesus Christ exposes the depth of our depravity so that we learn to look to the Spirit for life. There are 3 main views of mankind- first most people think that mankind is basically good. We have default position to do what is right. I have faith in humanity- as most people would say. The second view is that man is morally neutral. Some are bad and other people are good- depends on their upbringing and influence. With better resources, programs and teaching we can increase the number of good people in this world. The third view of man is what the Bible reveals.

I. Unable to do Good

So what does the Bible say about man in his fallen state. After Adam and Eve rebelled in the garden, all mankind is now unable to do good. Rather, we are all bad! As QA 8 asks- are we so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good? Yes we are. Our reading from Rom. 3:12 affirms this- no one does good- not even one. There is no person who does good in this world. Now we have to be clear here, our definition of good is not the same as the worlds. As Jesus affirms, there is only One who is good- and that being is God! God alone is the fountain and source of all goodness- and He has the right to define what is good and what is not. So how does God define good works? What actions pass the test in God's sight- where He will say well done? As LD 33 outlines, good works as defined by God, are those works that are done by those who have a living faith- they are actions done in accordance with God's commandments and they are done for

God's glory in thanksgiving. So if an action is done by a person who does not have faith- or this work is not done for God's glory and in accordance with God's commandments- then that work is not good according to God's standards. As Rom. 14 says, whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. So to start off, we see that any action or work done by a person who does not have faith is a work of sin- as God defines it. That means that those who do not have faith cannot do what is strictly called a good work! Now to be clear, that is not to say that people are as bad as they could be. Many people have a moral compass that restrains sinful desire from reaching their full potential. People are capable for a great many works that are kind and benefit fellow man. They could even be called good for others- as long as we only have a horizontal and worldly view of good in mind. So this doctrine is not to dismiss the benefit of Philanthropy in society. But we need to be clear- the Bible approaches goodness from the view of God and not man! Our HC is still dealing with the first section- we are yet coming to grips with our own sin and misery. And Rom. 3 is clear- no one is good and no one does good! There is no person who is good in God's sight- no one has faith and believes in God by his own choice. So that lumps all mankind together in sin- unable to do good because we are rebellious sinners by nature. So the first view of man we saw in the introduction is exposed as wrong- we are not basically good- and we do not do what is right! We should not put our faith in humanity- because there is no one good by nature. We all fall- we are all rebellious.

II. Inclined towards Evil

Well then, what about our inclinations. I know that no one is perfect- we all mess up. But with a little bit more education- or the right programs- we can do more good than bad things, right? Well, this also is a wrong view of humanity. Mankind is not morally neutral- waiting for the right input to get the desired result. We are not a blank sheet of paper that we can color whatever color we want. No, not only are we fallen, we are also inclined toward all evil. As we read in Rom. 3:11- no one seeks after God. Listen to what Gen. 6:5 says- God looked at humanity and this was His verdict. That every inclination of the heart is only evil continually. Now let the gravity of those words sink in- every inclination. That means every thought,

desire and motivation. Is only evil continually. We are a tree leaning heavily to one side- waiting for a breeze to blow us over into sin. There is no escape. Every desire of the heart- every pursuit- everything we delight in- is only evil continually! The pervasiveness of our depravity is universal. We are totally depraved! Our natural desire is to do what is right in our eyes- to define what is good based on our perceptions. That is why our world is so hasty to get rid of prayer and the 10 Commandments from the public square- we do not like the reminders of God's Law. We want to define what is good and proper- not some deity we can't see! So the default position of man is not to seek God-nor to try and obey Him. But rather to run away from God and defy Him! We do not seek God's glory- but our own! Now this fact raises an important issue. If man by nature does not obey God- does he still have a free will? Does man have the ability- can we freely choose to do what we want to do? Well, we have to be clear here. We are free to choose to do what we want- we are not robots or machines. We can freely do and act and move. But we are not able or willing to choose to obey God freely and on our own. Without the Spirit, our soul is in enmity with God and we cannot comprehend divine things. So we are not free to obey God because our will- our heart is bound to sin and shrouded in darkness! But this blinding allegiance to sin is according to our own choice and desire! So we are free to do as we desire- but since our desires are bound to sin and under the reign of iniquity- we will never choose to obey or seek after God. Like sheep we have all gone astray as Is. 53 puts it. Unclean and polluted hearts cannot and will not bring forth goodness. Job confessed this when he said- who can bring something clean out of something that is unclean. In other words- good works cannot come from a heart that is dead in sin! Bramble bushes do not produce grapes! So it becomes clear- we are not basically good by nature- nor are we morally neutral- rather we are totally corrupt and inclined towards all evil.

III. Unless!

So far we have not had a lot of good news- but there is one word that changes all that. Looking at QA 8- don't let this word slip your attention. Unless! Now "Unless" is a pretty powerful word! You have no hope for salvation, unless someone dies in your place and pays your debt! You will spend eternity in hell unless

you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ! And in our context, you will be unable to do anything good in God's sight, unless you are born again! You will remain totally depraved, unable to do anything good and inclined towards all evil, unless you are born again! There is good news wrapped up in this one, little word! There is hope for us- there is cure! That hope is found in the work of the Holy Spirit within! You and I need to be changed within- we need a new heart! We need life planted within! And this is the very work that Jesus was describing to Nicodemus in John 3. By nature we born of the flesh- in the kingdom of darkness. Born natural slaves- dead in our sins. Those who are born of the flesh cannot please God and cannot do good! But those who are born again- born of the Spirit- have the new life granted within by which we may and do begin to obey and live a holy life that is pleasing to God! As the Spirit resides within, faith and love are produced. We are changed and given what is necessary for us to live a new life! We are changed from bramble bushes to fruitful branches on the vine of Christ. As Titus 2 says, God is purifying us so that we might be zealous for good works. Without the purifying work of the Spirit, we would not have the zeal- the will and the way are provided by the spirit of regeneration. To say this another way, for fallen man to do good, first a miracle must occur! Now why is this truth so important? Why do we need to know how and where good works come to be? Well, if we believed that we could in ourselves muster up the strength to do good, we would rely on ourselves and boast in our works. Understanding the necessity of the Spirit's work then pus us in the right frame of mind to pray for and ask the Spirit to enable and strengthen us to do the good! We need Christ by His Spirit to give us hearts of flesh- to receive the mind of Christ- that by the Spirit we might live in a way that glorifies God!

As we close, our QA 8 has exposed the error of both the Pelagian and semi-Pelagian position. Man is not good by nature- nor are we basically neutral at birth. We are born dead in our sins- unable to do good and inclined towards evil. Jesus Christ exposes the depth of our depravity so that we learn to look to the Spirit for life. Our only hope is in the Savior who gives us new life by way of the Spirit within. Only then can we begin to properly know and obey our God in faith! Praise God for the Spirit of regeneration and renewal!