

Human Imperfection

Ecclesiastes 7:20

I. INTRODUCTION:

A. *The Text in Context*—

1. This text presents a thought which is consistent throughout the Bible: the imperfection or sinfulness of man.
2. It appears in other texts in slightly different words, but the idea is the same:
 - a. “There is no man which sinneth not” (II Chronicles 6:36).
 - b. “In thy sight no man living is righteous” (Psalms 143:2b, ASV).
 - c. “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin” (Proverbs 20:9).
 - d. “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles that they are all under sin” (Romans 3:9-12).
 - e. “The scripture hath concluded all under sin” (Galatians 3:21).
3. The greatest men mentioned in the Bible sinned (there is only one exception, Jesus (Hebrews 4:15; I Peter 2:22)).
 - a. Noah became drunk (Genesis 9:20–21).
 - b. Abraham lied twice (Genesis 12:10-20; 20:1–18).
 - c. Moses disobeyed God (Numbers 20: 7–12; Psalms 106:32–33).
 - d. David committed adultery with Uriah's wife and had him killed to cover up his sin (II Samuel 11).
 - e. Peter denied the Lord and swore a false oath (Matthew 27:69-75).

B. *How Shall We Use This Truth?*

1. We can attempt to use it as an excuse for sin.
 - a. Some may say: “Well, nobody's perfect.”
 - b. That is like:

- (1) A soldier who is AWOL comparing himself to the man who is on sick call recovering from wounds received in battle.
- (2) A car dealer selling a car with four out of six cylinders firing.
- 2. We can use it as an excuse for giving up the fight against sin.
 - a. Idea of some: "What's the use? I tried and failed!"
 - b. That is like:
 - (1) A quarterback who quits and goes home after his failure to score a touchdown on his first series of downs.
 - (2) A salesman who turns in his sales kit because he fails to sell his first call.
- 3. Yet, there are some helpful ways in which to approach this common but unfortunate feature of humanity.

II. DISCUSSION:

A. It Should Produce Personal Meekness & Self Abasement—

- 1. Why do so many of us only admit our sins and sinfulness if and when we happen to get caught?
 - a. David is a "good" example (II Samuel 12:1-14; cf. Ps.51:1-17).
 - b. Though man may never catch us, God knows (Psalms 69:5; Proverbs 15:3; Hebrews 4:13).
- 2. Christ taught the disciples to admit their sins when they pray (Luke 11:1-4).
- 3. A Christian should never become complacent and self-satisfied, but pray and confess me sins every day (1 John 1:9).

B. It Should Help Us See Our Neighbors & Their Sins Differently—

- 1. The tendency is to condone in ourselves what we condemn in others:
 - a. Idea of some: "I just make mistakes, but my brother sins."
 - b. Like the old woman: "I could see my faults as well as anyone, if I had any!"
- 2. We must never be judgmental of the faults of others in a way that we would refuse to have ourselves reviewed (Matthew 7:1-5).
 - a. We are to examine ourselves (II Corinthians 13:5; cf. I Corinthians 11:28-32).

- b. Remember, forgiveness of our sins is a two-sided matter. Our being forgiven depends on our forgiving others (Matthew 6:14–15; Mark 11:25).
 - c. We need to develop some understanding and compassion, and learn to show some mercy toward the weak and erring (Hebrews 2:17).
3. Yet, it should never cause us to:
- a. Be tolerant of sin.
 - b. Compromise with sinners while they are still in sin.
 - c. Note how stern Peter (the ex-denier) was in his treatment of the sins of others when they were guilty (Acts 5:1-4; 8:18-23).

C. It Should Teach Us to Avoid Thinking of Men More Highly Than We Ought—

- 1. Men are men, and all have sinned and can and do sin.
- 2. The phrase “without sin” is used only of Jesus in the Bible (I Peter 2:22; II Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15).
 - a. No other an ever qualified so as to have it applied to him (not even the very best of Bible men).
 - b. There have been many that are recognized as “blameless” (Luke 1:6; I Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 2:15; I Thessalonians 5:23; I Timothy 3:2, 10; Titus 1:6–7; II Peter 3:14).
 - c. There is a significant difference.
 - d. We are to follow after men only when it is sure that they follow Christ (I Corinthians 11:1; Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 3:17).
- 3. Every human being will eventually fail in certain particulars—Christ is the only perfect model. Consider:
 - a. Some who have quit the church because they have been disappointed by some preacher, elder or member whom they admired.
 - b. Their model goes bad, and it throws them “for a loop.”
 - c. In disappointment & disgust, they return to the pollutions of the world (cf.

II Peter 2:20–21).

- d. Had their faith been centered in Christ, the entire congregation could become bad without affecting their faithfulness (I Corinthians 2:1-5).

D. It Should Make Us Realize Our Dependence Upon Christ & God's Grace—

1. Paul's writings abound in statements praising God's grace (Romans 3:24; 5:8–11; 7:24–25; Ephesians 2:1-9; Colossians 1:21–22; Titus 2:11–12).
2. Remembering his past life of sin, Paul felt his own dependence upon the mercy of God! He was saved because GOD saved him (I Corinthians 15:9– 10).
 - a. An interesting story concerning the Anglican cleric John Newton illustrates the disposition of mind we must acquire (from *Stories for Preachers*).
 - b. “Two or three years before the death of that eminent servant of Christ, the Rev. John Newton, an aged friend and brother in the ministry called on him at breakfast. Family prayer followed, and the portion of Scripture for the day was read to him. In it occurred the verse, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am’ (I Corinthians 15:10). After the reading of this text, he uttered this affective soliloquy: ‘I am not what I ought to be--ah! How imperfect and deficient! I am not what I wish to be. I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good. I am not what I hope to be. Soon, soon, shall I put off mortality, and, with mortality, all sin and imperfection. Yet though I am not what I ought to be, nor what I wish to be, nor what I hope to be, I can truly say I am not what I once was—a slave to sin and Satan; I can heartily join with the apostle and acknowledge, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am.’”
 - c. When we come to realize our own sinfulness, we recognize there is no room at all for pride (I Corinthians 1:30–31).

E. It Should Cause Us to Cultivate Certain Elements of Our Character—

1. We should cultivate the utmost vigilance over ourselves. The man who has a tendency to stumble will usually be careful how he walks (I Corinthians 9:27;

Philippians 2:12; Romans 11:20).

2. It will cause us to cultivate confidence and avoid despair. God did not cast off Abraham, David, nor Peter because they sinned (Psalms 37:24). The Lord forgives those who repent (Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:20–22; cf. II Peter 3:9).
3. It should cause us to cultivate patience (endurance) so we can finish the race (Hebrews 10:36–38; II Timothy 4:6–8).

III. CONCLUSION:

A. All of Us Sin; That Is Certain —

1. The difference between the Christian and the high-handed sinner is the way they respond to that fact (Psalms 19; etc.)
 - a. One repents and renounces his wrongs. The other refuses.
 - b. The Christian loathes his sins and longs for a time when he will be completely rid of them. The rebellious sinner loves his sins and joyfully wallows in them.
2. Which picture describes us? If it is the latter, now is the time to change your course.