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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

“Man in His Probation”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Heavenly Father, we come to Thee in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our great High Priest, who has offered the once and for all sacrifice, by which, we are brought into the fellowship of the eternal Trinity. We thank Thee that he not only, as a priest, has offered the sacrifice that makes possible access, but now carries on his priestly activity at Thy right hand.

And we thank Thee that he lives forever and among his many works are his prayers for us. And we would thank Thee for a great High Priest in his ministry to us day by day. And now, Lord, we pray that he may teach us through the Spirit as we turn again to the word of God. Enable us to understand some of the deep things of the Scriptures. And may they be profitable to us in building us up in our faith. We commit the hour to Thee.

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

[Message] Now, our subject tonight is a very big subject. It is “Man in His Probation, or Amissability versus Indefectibility.”

Now, you don't have to remember anything but, “Man in His Probation.” Will you turn with me now to Genesis chapter 2. And, first, a few words of introduction.

According to the Bible, what I have been saying and what I hope you have been learning, is that man was created, possessed of body, soul, and spirit. He was created in maturity and in holiness; that is, in moral holiness. So that we can, he was created in maturity and in perfection.

He was also created in the image of God, to use the Scriptural expression. And that image of God, I said last time, involved three aspects: it involves man’s rational nature by which he is enabled to know God. It involves man’s moral nature, enabling him to enjoy righteousness and holiness of the truth. That is evidently the work of the Holy Spirit in the Christian to restore us to the knowledge of righteousness and holiness of the truth. And this is said to be after the image of God. And so we may reason backwards and infer from that that man was created with a moral nature, which enabled him to enjoy righteousness and holiness of the truth in the Garden of Eden.

Then we also said, finally, that the image of God involved man’s regal office, giving him authority over the creation. And what we have also been saying, both directly and implicitly, is that we know these things not by human speculation but by divine revelation.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, a long time ago, “Science is a good piece of furniture for a man to have in an upper chamber, provided he has common sense on the ground floor.”

Now, better still to have divine revelation in the basement. So that if you are, in your thinking, grounded upon divine revelation, well then you will be safe. And it is good to have common sense on the ground floor, and science in an upper chamber. We are interested in science and we are -- certainly, we hope that we are interested and possess good common sense, but the important thing is to have that divine revelation as the foundation of what we think we know.

In coming to Man’s probation in the Garden of Eden, we come to some further questions. For example, what was the nature of man’s probation? Or how does sin begin

in the human heart? Or can unfallen man change his holy inclination? And, of course, can fallen man change his unholy inclination?

Now, we know man has power over his volitions, but can he change his basic inclination of the will? That’s a question, I think, that all of us should be interested in. But let’s turn to our subject and Roman 1 in our outline, the biblical description of the probation. And it is found in Genesis chapter 2, verse 8 through verse 17. So, let’s turn there and will you listen as I read beginning with verse 8 of Genesis chapter 2.

“And the LORD God planted a garden toward the east in Eden; and there he placed the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

Now a river flowed out of Eden to water the garden; and from there it divided, and became four rivers. The name of the first is Pison: it flows around the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: the bdellium and the onyx stone are there. And the name of the second river is Gihon: it flows around the whole land of Kush. And the name of the third river is Tigris: it flows east of Assyria. And the fourth river is the Euphrates.

Then the LORD God took the man, and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, From any tree of the garden you may eat freely: But from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat: for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

The biblical description of the probation. There is one thing I think that we can say, generally, about Adam’s probation, God’s provision of the Garden of Eden at the beginning. God’s provision for Adam was a model of parental care. As someone has said, the fledgling is sheltered but he is not smothered. On all sides, discoveries and

encounters await him to draw out his powers of discernment and choice. And there is ample nourishment, as verse 9 suggests, for his aesthetic, physical and spiritual appetites. Further, there is a man’s work before him, for body and mind.

I think that is true. Adam was placed in most favorable circumstances, the kind of circumstances that would have ministered to success in the probation that he is faced with.

Let’s look at it more specifically, and first of all, or capital A, The Garden and the trees. And there are three factors that I think we ought to notice. Particularly in the light of some of the things that modern scholarship says about the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis. The first place, the scene is designed by Moses to be a real scene; that is, he understands it as a real scene, not as a symbolical scene.

It is common among modern scholars to speak of the first eleven chapters of the Book of Genesis as mythology. Now, they do not always mean by that that it is totally unreal. But what they mean by that is that Moses is attempting to communicate spiritual truth to us by the use of myth, religious myth. And the question of whether it is historical or not is beside the point; although most modern scholars do not believe that these chapters are historical.

What they would like for us to believe is that these chapters are not necessarily historical, but they do speak to us of timeless truths, which have the approval of God. Now I think that as we read these chapters, we do not get the impression that this scene is designed to be symbolical.

Notice, for example, the geographic phrases of verse 8: “And the LORD God, planted a garden toward the east in Eden.” Notice the descriptions of the rivers in verses 10 through 14. These descriptions in relative detail do not give us the impression that this is a symbolical picture. But rather, these details given, give us the impression that Adam regards this as an actual spot in the near east; not an allegorical spot. So I think that as

we read Genesis, we would gain the impression that the author intended us to think that this was a real scene; not a symbolical one.

Secondly, now, there has been some discussion about whether there were two trees in the midst of the Garden of Eden. For example, you could render verse 9 this way: "And out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight, and good for food; the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, even the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." And so, the Tree of Life is equated with the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. If there were -- if it was to be understood in the sense of one tree, we would have a difficult time handling chapter 3, verse 22. "Then the LORD God said,

"Behold, the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"

So I think we are, I think, required to conclude that there were two trees in the midst of the garden; one, the Tree of Life, the other, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

And, third, the trees are designed to be regarded as literal trees. But now, I do not think -- and this is just my own opinion, so I'll warn you about this. This is my own opinion... It is my own opinion that these trees were designed to be something like sacramental trees; that is, they did not in themselves possess the power of life or the power of the knowledge of good and evil. Those powers rested in God. But, they were the means by which God designed to test Adam.

And, likewise, I think in Revelation chapter 21 and 22, where we have a similar type of thing and the trees -- The Tree of Life, which is for the healing of the nations. I think, again, that the power -- the reality rests with God and that these trees are designed to be something like the bread and the wine at the Lord's Supper. But now, that is my opinion. And you may want to think that that tree had that literal power, to give life or to give the

knowledge of good and evil. That is your privilege. You can differ with your teacher there. I rather think that they were seals, or pledges, of the reality signified by the terms.

I think we can pass by the description of the rivers because they -- that does not seem to figure very much in the passage, and move on to, capital C, the probation. The probation, verses 15 through 17.

President Nixon, a few weeks ago, gave a speech. I’ve forgotten whether it was on the west coast or on the east coast or in Florida, but the theme of it was: The Work Ethic.

Now, that is a biblical thing, not that the President realized it. I did not read his speech, but I imagine he did not begin with a text from the Book of Genesis and seek to show that this work ethic is a biblical ethic. We know that the Protestants, who make up the Reformed tradition of Protestantism, have stressed strongly the work ethic. Presbyterians have stressed the work ethic, for example, that branch of Christianity. And they have taught constantly until relatively recent times where they don’t bother much with the Bible, they have taught the idea that men ought to work; and that is a Biblical thing. Notice, verse 15,

“The LORD God took the man and put him into the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”

And he was required to cultivate it and to keep it, ever before he fell. So the idea of work as a judgment in the latter part of chapter 3 must not be thought of as indicating that Adam did not work beforehand. His work was not to be as rewarding after the fall, but he was given by God the duty to cultivate and to keep that garden.

Now, I think another thing that we need to think of here is that this first sin that Adam committed was evidently a willful and wanton sin since it was committed under circumstances that made it easy not to commit it. Everything was in Adam’s favor, so to

speak. There was no solicitation to evil that Adam was not given the power to overcome, apparently. A maximum was allowed him. He could eat of every tree of that garden. One tree, the minimum, was forbidden him. So the maximum was allowed him; the minimum was forbidden him. Furthermore, he was not given moral principles, which he may not have had the wisdom to apply. The condition, which is set forth, is this simple condition of the bare word of God, not a moral principle, policy. Not a principle, but simply, the bare word of God,

"In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die."

So Adam then is in the garden on probation.

Now, let's move on to Roman II, the theological significance of the probation. One question I would like to raise at this point is, is this Edenic arrangement described for us in Genesis chapter 2 a biblical covenant? Now, it is true that in Genesis chapter 2, there is no reference to covenant. We might be inclined to say it was not therefore a covenant. God did not make a covenant with Adam in the Garden of Eden.

On the other hand, there are elements here that would seem to involve a covenant. For example, there is an arrangement between two parties; and arrangement between God and Adam and Eve. Second, there is a condition. Adam is told that he is not to eat of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden. Third, there is a promise of reward, implied. And there is a definite penalty stated, explicitly.

Now, if a covenant is an arrangement between two persons based upon some kind of condition -- it may be an unconditional covenant, but it is still an arrangement between two people with certain promises of rewards and penalties involved -- well, then this was a covenant. So it would seem that, in spite of the fact that, that term is not used, that we would be on fairly safe ground in referring to this as a covenant.

What shall we name it? Well, Covenant theologians have called this the covenant of works. They’ve called it the covenant of works because Adam is placed in the Garden of Eden and he was required to keep this particular condition. Others have called it the Edenic Covenant. Still others have called it the Covenant of Life. Well, it might be difficult for us to arrive at a term that would satisfy everybody.

The Edenic Covenant would probably satisfy everybody except that it does not really specify the essential character of the covenant; merely locates it geographically. Well, I just call it the Edenic Covenant in the light of the fact that it is difficult to specify more directly at the present time.

But I want you to turn over with me to Hosea chapter 6 in verse 7, for further support of the idea that this was a genuine covenant. Hosea chapter 6 in verse 7 -- Now, Hosea is speaking in Hosea chapter 6 of the sins of Ephraim and Judah. And while you’re finding the 6th chapter in the 7th verse, I’ll begin reading at the 4th verse,

“What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud and like the dew which goes away early. Therefore I have hewn them in pieces by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of My mouth; and the judgments on you are like the light that goes forth.

For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice, and in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings. But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; (But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant. Now, you may have a text that says, “like man,” but in the Hebrew text the word is *adam*, and that is the word for Adam) Like Adam they have transgressed the covenant; there they have treacherously against Me.”

And this seems to be the prevailing view of the interpreters that this should be rendered, “Adam.” I agree with it, myself, and it makes sense in the paragraph, and the prophet is therefore drawing a parallel between the disobedience of Israel of God’s

commandments and Adam in the Garden of Eden. So, like Adam, they have transgressed the covenant.

Now, that would imply then that Hosea regarded that arrangement in the Garden of Eden as a covenant. Furthermore, you will remember -- and we will talk about this very soon now, when we deal with the subject of original sin, which we’re beginning next time -- in the New Testament in the 5th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Romans, and in the 15th chapter of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he draws a definite parallel between God’s dealings with Adam, on the one hand, and his dealings with Adam, the last, on the other. And in the light of the fact that God’s dealings with the Lord Jesus Christ, are the foundation of the New Covenant, it would not seem out of the way to regard his dealings with the first Adam in the Garden of Eden as also a covenantal arrangement.

So I’m inclined to think then that we do have a covenant between God and Adam in the Garden of Eden; though it is not specifically called that in Genesis chapter 2. The point, however, doesn’t have a great deal of significance for us, because if we don’t like the idea of covenant, we can just say it was an arrangement between the two – or a covenantal kind of arrangement. We’re saying much the same thing.

Now, let’s look at the details of it. Capital A, the contracting parties to the arrangement. This arrangement in the Garden of Eden theologically is an arrangement between the triune God and Adam, the first man. Adam is the natural father of the human race by creation, and he is the representative head of the human race by this compact in the Garden of Eden.

A lot of people have difficulty with the theory of representation. They either do not understand or do not like the idea that Adam acted as a representative for men. They don’t like to think that God should have arranged things so that what Adam did affects us. It, at first, seems to be unfair.

Now, since we’re going to deal with that later on, I don’t want to say too much now because I would be stealing my own thunder. But let me just say this: there is no

question but that Adam, in his actions, affected us. Whether we like it or not, the fact remains. The fact remains that Adam sinned. And as a result of his sin, he died. And not only did he die, but all of his descendents have died, with one or two miraculous exceptions. All have died. All stand under the judgment of death.

So whether we like it or not, the facts are that Adam’s actions have affected us. And if you want a good illustration of Adam’s work and how it affects us, take a look at the speaker tonight. For, if you had seen me fifteen or twenty years ago, why, you would have said, “My, what a handsome man, and such powers of life.” [Laughter] “But now look at him. His hair is practically gone. It’s turned gray. The wrinkles are all over his face. And he’s the same abominable character he used to be, but nevertheless, you can tell the Fall is manifest in his physical appearance.”

So the facts are that the Fall affects us. Adam did act for us, whether we like it or not. So he is the natural father of the race by creation. He is the representative head of the race by virtue of this creation and the compact made between God and Adam. This penalty has then taken effect in the lives of men since the time of Adam.

Capital B, the promise of the arrangement. What did God promise Adam in the garden by this arrangement? Well, there is no specific statement to this effect. The penalty is stated. We read in verse 17,

“Thou shall not eat of it, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

So the penalty is stated, but the promise is not specifically stated.

Well, we know that if Adam was to die, then he already had life. And since he had life in the knowledge of God -- that is evident from chapter 3. God came down in the Garden of Eden as his custom was, in fellowship with Adam, he had spiritual life. So there must be some form of life that is beyond the life that Adam had. So we can say, I

think, that he had spiritual life already. What is it that he could have that would be more than he spiritual life that he had?

Well, it is evident that his spiritual life was a kind of life that he could lose. It was amissable. That’s the reason for that term, amissability. Amissability is the quality of being able to be lost. So the life that he had was spiritual life, but it was life that he could lose.

Now, what is it that Adam might have gained? Well, he might have gained indefectibility: spiritual life that he could not lose. That is, what you and I have by virtue of redemption. Since we have come to know Jesus Christ, we not only have spiritual life, but we have indefectible spiritual life. That is, if we are not wandering around in the darkness of Arminianism and thinking that we can lose our salvation. If we do believe that we have a form of security when we believe in Jesus Christ, then we have spiritual life that is indefectible. We cannot lose it.

Well, now, I’m inclined to think that that is what Adam would have gained had he been obedient in the Garden of Eden. The spiritual life that he possessed, which was amissable, would have become indefectible, by virtue of his obedience. But, again, I want you to notice that that is not specifically stated. I think it is implied rigidly, necessary that we reason that way. But it is not stated specifically. The penalty is.

Capital C, the objective test of this arrangement in the Garden of Eden. The objective test gathers around the tree; the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is the objective test before Adam. He can eat of all of the trees of the garden but of the tree that was in the midst of the garden he was not allowed to eat of that. And in the day that he ate of it, he was to die.

What was that tree? There is nothing in Scripture that suggests that it was an apple tree. There is nothing in Scripture that suggests that it was a date tree. Some have thought that that was the type of tree since it was the kind of tree you might expect in the

East. There are others who have said that the tree was “moral perception” as if Adam was a kind of neutral person before the test came to him.

I said the other night, and tried to stress this, that the Bible seems to teach that Adam was created in holiness, in moral holiness, not in innocence in the sense of neutrality. He was created with his will inclined toward that which is good. There is no such thing as being created with a will which is neutral. The very fact that it is a will demands that it be inclined one way or the other morally, either good or bad. It’s not a will if it’s not. That’s like creating a man with a mind, which doesn’t think. It wouldn’t be a mind. Or creating a man in knowledge but giving him no content. It wouldn’t be knowledge. And a will wouldn’t be a will if it was not inclined one way or another.

And since other things seem to indicate that Adam was in fellowship with God, knew God, walked with God, the -- certainly the thing that we are to think is that he was created in moral holiness. That’s why God, when he looked at him, said, “It’s very good.”

Now, the tree, then, is not moral perfection. Some have even suggested that the tree was just everything. I don’t know where they get that idea. And then others, this is a more modern interpretation, that the tree was sexual awakening.

You’ll notice that nothing is said in these chapters about the properties of that tree; for you see, it is not the properties of the tree that are important. It is the “use” to which Adam will put the tree that is important. It’s use as a test. So what it was we are not certain of, but it was a simple test posed for Adam. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the midst of the garden.

Fifth or E -- Fourth, D, the subjective condition of the arrangement. God’s demands settled on one point and that point is faith-obedience. Now when I say faith obedience, I mean the obedience of faith. I mean the faith that obeys. There is no real difference between faith and obedience. Faith-obedience is the same.

Now, you remember from our study of faith, that faith is made up of three things: faith is made up of knowledge or perception. It is made up of assent. It is made up of

trust. So that in order for a man to exercise faith, he must have something to believe, he must assent to that something, whatever it teaches, and then he must trust that. These three elements make biblical faith.

Now, for example, in the preaching of the gospel, all three of those things are necessary. It’s no use to get up in front of an audience and say, “We ought to believe.” “We ought to believe.” “We ought to believe.” Because, if I were sitting in the audience I would want to say, “What shall I believe?”

So in our preaching, we must always be sure, first of all, to give men something to believe. That’s knowledge. *Gnarritas* that’s the Latin term for it. Gnarritas Knowledge. Give them something to believe. So if you as a Christian, are seeking to lead somebody to Jesus Christ, one of the first things that you must do in order to prepare the ground for their salvation, if it’s the Spirit’s will that they be saved, give them something to believe. Tell them something about Jesus Christ. Who he is. What he has done.

Then, second, it is necessary for that person to assent to that teaching. If I was to say, “Jesus Christ has come as the Son of God and has died for the sins of sinners, and men may have salvation upon the basis of trust in him.”

Well, now, I have knowledge of the gospel. The next thing in my faith is that I must assent to that. That is, I must be brought, by the Holy Spirit, to the conviction that that is true. That’s true. Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He has come to die for us. It is possible for men to have life through him. I may still be lost and believe all of that. Because, you see, not only is it necessary to have knowledge and assent, but there must be personal trust. (If I’m waving my hand to you, it is not because I’ve gone crazy. It’s because there is a fly up here that’s about to drive me crazy. I’m afraid to open my mouth. [Laughter])

Now, the conditions that were set before Adam were the conditions of faith obedience. And in Adam’s faith, there was knowledge. God gave him certain instruction. Adam was required to assent to it and to trust in it, the words of God.

It is commonly said by men that the essence of sin is the rebellion against God; the desire to be independent. I do not believe that. The essence of sin is unbelief. The issue of unbelief is rebellion and independence. And that, finally, leads to immorality. So that the line is: unbelief, independence, and rebellion, and immorality. All immorality is sin. But sin is not necessarily immorality. Sin is unbelief.

When Adam sinned, he sinned, first of all, by the act of unbelief of the word of God. For the very fact that he did this was an acknowledgment of the fact that he did no longer believe that it was true that that was the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Then, that in the day he ate of it he would die.

Now, that is why the Lord Jesus, told the disciples that he was going away, and he was going to send the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And then he specified. He said, “Of sin; because they are bad,” No. “Of sin, because they are rebellious?” No. “Of sin; because they are autonomous.” They are independent of God? No. Of sin because they believe not “on me.” That is the essence of sin, unbelief. Unbelief leads to independence and rebellion. And that leads to immorality. It is the out breaking of it. It is the out breaking of it in the flesh.

So, the one subjective condition of the arrangement is: Adam’s faith-obedience. That touched his will. Capital E -- Are we clear on that? That, by the way, is why the New Testament says, “Believe on the Lord, Jesus Christ, and thou shall be saved.” That’s why the New Testament is so full of the idea of faith, the faith obedience, the obedience of faith, for that is man’s sin: unbelief.

5, The penalty of the arrangement. Well, the penalty is easy to discern from the text because verse 17 [Genesis 2] says,

“For in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”

Well, it is evident of course, that Adam did not die physically the moment that he partook of the tree, and so, it is evident from that, that essentially the penalty of the arrangement is spiritual death. That’s the one penalty: spiritual death.

Now, again, we are going to deal with this in more detail later on when we talk about original sin and its consequences. But let me just state what I am speaking about, and then we’ll move on. The penalty imposed upon Adam if he should break the terms of the Edenic covenant is spiritual death, which issues in physical death. And if there is no deliverance, finally, in eternal death. So again, the chain is: physical death, spiritual death and, if no deliverance, eternal death.

6, the necessity of this arrangement. Why was it necessary for Adam to be put to this test? I’m not sure I can answer all of this. I know the angels were put to a similar kind of test, apparently, because there are good angels, and there are evil angels; and the evil angels fell. So, apparently, there is something in the nature of the case that requires that men and angels be put to a test.

We know that in the case of Adam, this was done. And in the case of the angels, it was done. And so, since God never does anything but that which is most wise, and most good, that which is perfect; we can rest in the fact that it is necessary. Apparently, it was necessary for the obtaining of indefectibility, or immutable perfection. Adam had perfection; but his perfection was mutable. He could lose it. It was amissable. But this test was necessary for the obtaining of indefectibility.

Now, it was not for God’s curiosity. He was not sitting in heaven on his throne saying, “I wonder if Adam will fall?” Because, being omniscient, all knowing, he knew full well what would happen when Adam was put to the test.

As a matter of fact, if you were here when we were studying the decrees -- and if you weren’t, well, you may not understand what I’m going to say now and it may puzzle you. But God knew from the beginning all of this that was going to happen. As a matter

of fact, he arranged it all in order that he might display his glory, the glory of his justice and the glory of his grace.

And so the idea that God may have done this out of some sense of curiosity is totally contrary to the teaching of the word of God. It was not either because God is a malevolent kind of being. Some people tend to think of God that way. Most do before they are converted. They think of God as a kind of god who is malevolent, designing to single them out, waiting to hurl his thunderbolts of judgment upon them.

It’s a good idea, by the way, to realize that you are under the judgment of God. But to think of him as essentially a being like that is the result of sin in the human will and heart. So it was not for God’s curiosity. It was not because he is a malevolent being. Adam was created something like a child, perfect in parts but not yet in degree. And, apparently, this test was designed to bring him to his perfection in degree. He had a positive holiness, but his holiness was amissable. He could lose it. By means of this test, it would become indefectible.

Are you getting acquainted now with those terms? Amissable and indefectible?

Well, let’s move on to, thirdly, to the psychological analysis of the Edenic decision. Now, I always react against the term “psychological.” I want to assure you that when I use this term, I’m using it in the sense of the biblical psychology. The biblical psychology is the biblical teaching on the human inner man: his soul, his spirit, his will, the old man, the new man, the heart; all of these terms that have to do with the inner man. And we cannot get away from it. And so, we’ll have to speak of the psychological analysis of the Edenic decision. We mean, “What kind of decision took place in Adam’s heart?” “In Adam’s inner man?”

Now, here again, it is essential for us to define the term “will” and to say a few things about it. Capital A, the modern psychology. Generally speaking, I think this is true. I’m not a psychologist, and I don’t attempt to keep up with the latest in psychology.

But generally speaking, modern psychology has conceived of the powers of the soul as being divided into the intellect, the sensibility, and the will.

That, probably is too narrow a description of the powers of the soul, because in the case of sensibility, if we’re thinking of the five senses, that is too narrow to describe the things that have to do within the inner man of a spiritual being. He has spiritual desires and spiritual aspirations that can hardly be classified as sensibilities, for sensibility has to do with the senses.

Holy and sinful affections are mental; and they are disconnected with the physical organism. But this is typical of what we might expect because modern psychology and modern philosophy are not necessarily cognizant of the spiritual life that you and I are cognizant of.

The older psychology, capital D, divided the powers of the soul into the understanding and the will. Now, it’s a difficult matter, and I don’t have to decide that thing. I don’t think I really have the sense to do it. The thing we are interested in is the will, regardless of whether we think of the inner man as composed of intellect, sensibility and will; or simply understanding and will. The thing we are interested in is the will.

Now, there are several important things that I want you to bear in mind. We’re going to continue with this next time, when we talk about original sin. But these three things, I think, it is important for us to bear in mind. First of all, we must be able to distinguish between the will’s inclination, the will’s volition, and the will’s action. Inclination, volition, action.

Now, what is inclination? The inclination of the will? Well, what I mean by that term, and don’t let my terms throw you. I’m sure you will recognize there is a reality here regardless of what we may call it. But inclination is a common theological term. Inclination is the central action of the will.

The inclination of the will is a spontaneous faculty of the will. It is not something that one arrives at by virtue of choice. It is self-determined. It is inherited. “The bent of

my will.” It has in view certain ends, as basic to my life, and my inclination of will is set towards them. If I’m a Christian, my will has been inclined toward God. If I’m a non-Christian, my will has been inclined toward earthly ends.

It is that which is causative of my character. It is something common to rational beings. It is something I inherit. It is something I can do nothing about. The bent of my will. I am totally unable to change it.

That’s why preaching, which tells men that you ought to change your will is fruitless kind of preaching and it leads to despair on the part of those who listen to it. The kind of preaching that tells us what we ought to do, but never tells us how it may be accomplished. “You ought to be this.” “You ought to be that.” “You ought to do this.” And it’s up to you and your will. But that’s just my problem. My will is turned the other way. I’m so often thinking, you know, I want something down deep -- some change down deep within -- inside of me, that will so transform me that I am able to do what you’re telling me; which I knew all along before I listened to you say that. This is the kind of thing, you know, that we are interested in. A will, this inclination of the will then, is the basic bent of a man’s will.

Now, what is his volition? Well, his volition arises out of his inclination. His inclination has certain aims and ends in view, and his volition is the choices that he makes in order to accomplish that end, so that, volition is superficial kind of action. Inclination is the will’s central action. Volition involves the power of choice. It issues from the inclination. It’s the means toward the end that I may choose.

The will’s action is the outward act. Now, a volition is changeable. For example, let’s just assume a man that’s an alcoholic. He is in total -- totally imprisoned by this desire that has so gripped him he cannot change it. Well, now, he may modify his volitions depending upon the circumstances. And it may appear that he is exercising a power of choice that touches his inner man. But that’s not true. For example, I may offer him a drink. But since his relatives are nearby he may say, “I don’t believe I want it.”

And so, out of his volition he decides he does not want it. But really his inclination has not changed a bit. Why? Just the shame or the fear has caused him to modify the volition, but it has not caused him to modify his inclination.

Now, I’m stressing these things because Adam, you see, was created with a holy inclination. Consequently, his volitions originally were volitions that arose out of a holy inclination. He was inclined toward holiness. And his volitions, his choices, were holy.

Now then, the second thing, Adam’s holiness was a holy inclination of the will but not an immutable inclination. It was not an unchangeable inclination.

Now, Adam was finite, and you might have expected that. But his probationary test revolved around his will, its holy inclination and the fact that it was mutable. Would he continue in his created holy inclination or would he begin a second inclination that was evil? Now, that is the psychological analysis of the test that Adam was faced with.

Well, we know, regardless of how we analyze it, that Adam did not continue in his holy inclination. His evil began within himself. God did not begin it. It originated within himself. Not by selection or choice. If you say, well it began because he chose, well, what was it that made him choose? Well, there had to be a basic change in his inclination that would cause him to volitionally say, “I’ll take it, too, Eve.” So there was a change that took place in Adam’s inmost being, in his inmost will, in his inclination. He did not choose to incline. He inclined.

Now, someone will say, “How?” And there, you have me. It’s a mystery. I always feel embarrassed when I say to an audience that, “Here we have something that we cannot understand.” It is a mystery how the will with a holy inclination can lapse from the holy inclination to an evil inclination. I do not understand it. But let me remind you that that is what happened when sin arose in the heart of Satan.

Remember, in the text of Scripture, it was said that he was holy until the day that iniquity was found in him. Nothing is said about how it originated. But it was found in him. He was a being perfect in holiness. But iniquity was found in him.

Now, if it seems irrational to you, most theologians have said that’s what it should appear. Because evil is an irrationality. There is no rational basis for evil. It is irrational. Totally irrational. Why the creature should ever sin against the Creator is impossible to fully analyze, because it’s irrational.

Now, you know what an irrational person is, don’t you? There are lots of people who are irrational. There are far more people who are confused. If I were to say, “Charleston, South Carolina, is in New York.” You’d say, “Dr. Johnson is wrong. Charleston is in South Carolina.” Now, if I were to say to you, “Charleston is in New York and in Texas.” Well, you wouldn’t say I was wrong. You’d say I was confused. I would be believing something that is irrational. The place cannot be in two places at once. That’s irrational. Well, evil is irrational. I don’t think I can go beyond that. I’m just expatiating on my ignorance. [Laughter] So, let’s move on to point three.

Third, in regeneration a new inclination is given to men. Adam, who had a holy inclination, fell from his holy inclination so that he and his descendants are created with an evil inclination, which issues in evil choices. The choices themselves may be incidental, but they are reflections of an evil inclination, an evil nature. And they issue in outward acts that are evil.

Now then, in regeneration a new inclination is given. That is only given by the Holy Spirit. That is the work of regeneration. Recreation, that which God did in Adam, he now does again in man in the sense that he gives us a self-determining holy inclination, but this time our holy inclination is immutable. Given by God, immutable or indefectible. Westminster Confession has put it this way. “That the will is powerfully determined by the Holy Spirit in our salvation.”

Shedd writes, one of our great theologians, “The inclination or self-determination of regeneration differs from that of apostasy by the effect of God working in the will to will.” Remember the text in Philippians, “God works in the Christian so that he both wills and does the will of God.” It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do his will.

So then Adam was created; this is one of the great events in the history of men. Created with a holy inclination.

The second great event, the apostasy; Adam’s holy inclination became by his lapse which was self-originated, so far as we know, a mystery became an evil inclination. All men are born with this evil inclination. Until the day that they believe the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit works within them to create within them a new nature in which there is a holy inclination to do the will of God. That is the work of regeneration.

Next time, our subject is, “Man and His Fall, or Original Sin.”

I did not give you the rest of the outline, did I? You’re wondering about it, I’m sure. I forgot. Those I didn’t get to, that’s what I said. [garbled]

There was a theory of preaching once that said, the way to preach is this: in the beginning tell them what you’re going to say. Then say it. And then conclude by telling them what you’ve said. [Laughter] So I guess that’s what I’m doing here. This is what I said in the latter part of our study.

Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the teaching of Scripture. And we thank Thee that Thou has worked out this marvelous plan. And though it involved the fall of Adam, much sin and wickedness and suffering, we know that, ultimately, it shall redound to the glory of the triune God. And we thank Thee that in Thy wonderful grace, we are a part of Thy plan.

We want to praise Thee and worship Thee. Enable us, Lord, to understand the things that are difficult. But in the midst of our difficulties, prevent us from so puzzling over them that we fail to respond positively to the things that are plain and clear. We commit everyone present to Thee. And may the work of the Holy Spirit work in their hearts. May they be sanctified in the truth.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.

