

177. The Deplorable Condition of Natural Man in Spiritual Things.

O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself; but in Me is thine help.
Hos. 13, 9.

God created man with a knowledge of His will and indued him with power to do His will. But man also had the power to resist God's will, to disobey Him, if he chose to do so.

When Satan deceived man and took him captive, he took from him everything that would tend to enable him to escape from that captivity, and therefore he robbed him of the last vestige of the power to do God's will. With this holy power gone, he now had only the faculty to *resist* God's will, to do evil. And this is exactly the deplorable condition of natural, unconverted man until this day, and it will be his condition until the end of time.

God, in His holy Word, often speaks of this utter inability of the natural man to do anything that is good and of his power to resist the Holy Spirit and therefore to prevent his conversion and salvation. Jer. 13, 23 we read: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." How often would Jesus have gathered the inhabitants of Jerusalem together, "even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings," but He did not succeed. Why? With tears in His eyes He complains: "*And ye would not.*" Matt. 23, 37. And does not already the prophet of old complain of Israel: "Thou hast destroyed *thyself*"? This is the condition of natural man. He is, as the apostle writes to the Ephesians, "dead in trespasses and sins." "*Dead*" — there is no spiritual life in natural man, not a spark of it. How is he to come to life? By his own powers? No; he is *dead*; he has no power. How, then, is he to be brought to spiritual life? Through the work of the Holy Ghost. See, then, the great necessity of this work and its divine power!

Prayer.

Holy Ghost, one with the Father and the Son, eternally proceeding from both and yet never severed from them, we pray Thee, convince us of the necessity of Thy gracious presence. For of what value would have been to us the Father's love and the Son's suffering if Thou didst not come to sanctify our hearts? Without Thy light, how could we ever see the truth? Without Thy power, how could we ever apprehend and hold fast our Savior's grace? Without Thy continued labor, how could we ever hope to persevere unto the end? Without Thy joy, how could we be cheered? Without Thy comfort, how could our bleeding hearts be healed? Continue, therefore, to dwell in our hearts unto our blessed end. Amen.

Holy Ghost, with joy divine,
Cheer this saddened heart of mine;
Bid my many woes depart,
Heal my wounded, bleeding heart.

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