

*****DISCLAIMER*** Chapters nineteen and twenty take a decidedly hard turn toward Calvinism - which this editor does not agree with. While the Scriptures are not to be ignored which speak of GOD's Absolute Sovereignty, nor should we neglect those that address man's personal responsibility. Only that form of teaching which presents a balanced discussion of the two can be considered truth from the biblicist approach *****

MABEL CLEMENT

by

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

The usual crowd was on hand. The Doctor looked as if courage and confidence were gone out of him; but he apparently had made up his mind to hold on doggedly to the end.

"My friends," said Mr. Clement, "I am glad you have come at my invitation. I know we are all interested in the study of GOD's Word and these great doctrines that have so much to do with our salvation. I believe we should all be interested in the measure of human depravity and I hope you will feel free to discuss it."

"What have you to say on this subject, Doctor?" inquired Mr. Tibbs.

"I have this to say," was the reply, "of all the doctrines in the world, that of depravity as taught by the sects is the most absurd and unreasonable. But it belongs to a set of dogmas and doctrines that all go together."

"That last statement is true," said Mabel. "Scriptural doctrines are akin to each other and as naturally group themselves together as sheep and goats. Just what one believes about depravity will shape his beliefs all along the line. He will be orthodox or heterodox in his theology according as he is sound or unsound on the doctrine of depravity. This is the beginning, and if one starts right, he is hedged up to the right way; if he starts wrong, he can never get right till he makes a right start."

"What is meant by depravity?" inquired Mr. Tibbs. "Let some one define it."

"It is supposed by many," replied the Doctor, "to mean that man is as bad as he can be. Now, I deny it. It is true there is depravity in the world, but to say that man is wholly, totally depraved is simply nonsense."

"The Baptists hold to a great deal of nonsense, according to Dr. Stanly," was Mabel's rejoinder. "Let us see, the Doctor claims that man is by nature partially good and partially bad. Now, that which is bad cannot go to Heaven. Is it true?"

"You are correct," replied the Doctor.

"And that which is good cannot go to Hell. Is that true?" "Certainly," replied the Doctor.

"Well, then, when one of your partially depraved men dies, where does he go? He cannot go to Hell, for there is good in him; he cannot go to Heaven, for there is bad in him. So he will have to be divided and the good part taken to Heaven and the bad part thrust down into the lost world." This speech greatly confused the Doctor and amused the audience.

"But do you mean to say," inquired the exasperated Doctor, "that man is as bad as he can be? as bad as the Devil? as bad as the Devil can make him?"

"Oh, no, no!" said Mabel. "No Baptist believes that. When we say man is totally depraved we mean man is all depraved. Total means all, means the whole. It does not mean man is bad in the highest degree, for we suppose he will grow worse and worse as long as he lives in sin."

***** Editor note: If we understand that anything less than absolute perfection is in view when the Scriptures speak of man's goodness (JESUS was called good, and He made a direct reference to His deity - His attribute of perfection) - so, in the sense that none of us are as "good" as JESUS, we may rightly understand that there is "none good, no, not one!"*****

"Take this illustration: Here is a tumbler full of water clear and pure. Now put one drop of poison into the water and it spreads through every particle of the water, so that there is not a drop of water that is not poisoned. It is totally poisoned. But if you put more poison into it, it will be worse. So each man unsaved is totally depraved; but he can become more and more so, just as water can be more and more poisonous."

"That seems clear," said Mr. Tibbs. "Now let the Doctor tell us what part of man is depraved and what part is not."

The Doctor's face turned red as a beet; then after a halt he fired away in this manner: "Didn't JESUS say, '**Suffer the little children to come unto me... for of such is the kingdom of God?**' Didn't He say, '**Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven?**' Then they cannot be totally depraved."

"Let me answer that speech," spoke out a stranger. "Didn't JESUS say, '**Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves?**' Thus as something may exist in animals, in doves, even in venomous serpents, that it is right and proper for us to imitate; so some thing may be found in children for our imitation. But that children are depraved is evident from many passages of Scripture.

David says, '**Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.**' He does not here charge his mother with crime, but desires to acknowledge that depravity was woven into his very nature and bore date from the very origin of his being. Paul accordingly says, '**We... were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.**' Ephesians 2:3.

The word **'nature'** means procreative power, birth. So by birth, before conversion, and before we had done either good or evil, we were the children of wrath.

'Nature' in the Greek means that which has grown in us as the peculiarity of our being, growing with our growth and strengthening with our strength; what is inherent, not acquired. By that, on account of that we are objects of GOD's wrath. It is because human nature is depraved that, as David says, **'The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies'** (Psalm 58:3)."

"We are obliged to the gentleman for these well-chosen words," said Mabel. "Now, as the Doctor says some part of man is not depraved, I would like to find out what part it is.

Notice:

1. The flesh is corrupt. It is called by Paul **'sinful flesh'** (Romans 8:3). It is everywhere in the Bible represented as being against GOD. It strives against the renewed spirit in man. And Paul declares, **'I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.'** He cries out, **'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'** He also declares that with the flesh he serves the law of sin! See Romans 7:18-25. So the flesh is surely depraved.

"2. The heart is depraved: **'God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.'** (Genesis 6:5). If that is not total - I do not know how to express it. **'Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'**. The margin says, 'The Hebrew word signifies not only the imaginations, but also the purposes and desires: JESUS says, **'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.'** (Matthew 15:19). No wonder these evil things come out when the heart is filled with evil and only evil. And the fountain that sends forth all these foul streams must be bad.

"3. The mind is depraved. The understanding is darkened: **'There is none that understandeth'** (Romans 3:11). The mind is overwhelmed with gross darkness: **'Ye were sometimes darkness'** (Ephesians 5:8). And when made over again they are **'light in the Lord.'** The greatest graceless wits and philosophers are blind as moles to spiritual things, for Satan hath blinded their minds. Accordingly Paul says: **'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'** (I Corinthians 2:14, 15). The worldly wise man does not have the Spirit in him and so cannot understand spiritual things. But conversion is sunburst, is illumination, is education. The converted little child knows some things that earth's sages never can know till they, too, are translated out of nature's night into the marvelous light of the gospel.

"4. Conscience is corrupt: **'Even their mind and conscience is defiled.'** (Titus 1:15). Conscience can only do its work accordingly to the light it has to work by. And as it is in the dark it blunders. Accordingly JESUS said to His disciples: **'The time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.'** (John 16:2). Paul's conscience moved him to persecute JESUS and His disciples. What horrible things have been done in the name of conscience."

"Most of these things I admit," said the Doctor; "but Baptists contend that man is so depraved he is powerless, helpless and unable to recover himself from his fallen condition, or even please GOD in anything."

"It is true," replied Mabel, "there are amiable affections in unregenerate hearts; GOD has implanted natural affections in such hearts - such as the love of the mother for her child - so that where there is no holiness, life and human society may have many enjoyments.

But the love of GOD is dethroned in every unregenerate heart, and natural desire supercedes and prevails over the authority of GOD. Sinners do not submit to GOD's authority, but walk according to their own desires. This displeases GOD. Now here is a passage of Scripture the Doctor does not believe: **'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.'** Romans 8:7, 8. This teaches the sinner cannot perform any service acceptable to GOD."

"Let us see," replied the Doctor. "The Book teaches that we must not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Now, I affirm a sinner can come to church as well as a Christian."

"No, not as well, but as certainly," interrupted Mabel. "What is his motive? He is not prompted by love and so his act does not please GOD. He can choose to do right, but he cannot do anything aright and well, because he doesn't love it. He loves darkness and hates light, loves sin and hates holiness, and this prevents any acceptable service. Here is the trouble with the sinner: He lacks the disposition to serve GOD.

He has physical power to do many things GOD requires, but has no heart for it. This is why he is powerless. Let me illustrate: The Doctor is a strong, able-bodied man; but he cannot kill his little weakly wife. He has the physical power to stab her to the heart, or brain her with a club; yet he cannot, he is utterly incapable of such a deed. Why?

Because he lacks the disposition; he has not the will, and a man cannot please GOD, or serve GOD, because he lacks the disposition, has no heart, no will to do so."

"But the sinner can change his will and enter the service of GOD any day," interposed the Doctor; "and so we urge him to do."

"I wonder how the Doctor would go about changing his will in regard to killing his wife," replied Mabel. "I imagine it would be as hard to change his will, as to kill his wife. If the sinner be left to be controlled by his corrupt, fallen nature he is as utterly incapable of willing to be holy and to serve GOD as the Doctor is of willing to kill his wife."

"You make the sinner as powerless as a dead man," complained the Doctor.

"That is just what Paul did," responded Mabel. "He declared that sinners are dead. And JESUS says: **'No man can come to me, except it were given unto him of My Father.'** John 6:44 and 65."

"That is hard doctrine," said Mr. Tibbs, "but you seem to prove it by the Book."

"But how will a sinner ever come to JESUS if he doesn't will to come?" inquired the Doctor.

"JESUS says, '**All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me,**'" answered Mabel. "He declares they cannot come unless they are drawn, given; and all that are given come. This giving refers to the work of the HOLY SPIRIT on the heart, giving a disposition to come. It means about the same as Acts 13:48: '**As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.**' The Divine ordination is the cause, not the effect, of any man's believing."

"But I maintain the sinner is able to come to JESUS without any foreign force brought to bear on him," replied the Doctor. "He thinks, reasons, changes his mind and will and comes to JESUS of his own accord."

"I knew the Doctor did not believe what JESUS says," responded Mabel. "He declares no man can come to Him without help; but the Doctor contradicts JESUS and says the sinner can come."

"Where does he get the power to come?" inquired the flushing, chafing Doctor. "I deny that any power is given the sinner which he does not naturally have. The Gospel is preached to him, salvation is offered him and he is left to accept or reject without any divine interposition to dispose him, or give him a will he does not have."

"Let GOD's Word settle this dispute," said Mabel. ('Amen,' cried several voices.) "Turn to Philippians 2:13. Here Paul is speaking of obedience and says: '**It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.**' Also, in Hebrews 13:21 Paul prays that the GOD of peace may '**make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ.**'"

"But that was addressed to some Jewish church, some Hebrew converts to Christianity and is not applicable to sinners," said the Doctor.

"That would be hard to prove," replied Mabel. "It was evidently written to the Jews and Paul seeks to persuade them to abandon Judaism and adopt Christianity. Moreover, if Christians need to be moved to do GOD's will, how much more must sinners need it. This is what we ask GOD to do for sinners when we pray for them-draw them, dispose them, incline their wills, make them willing."

"That settles the dispute," said Mr. Tibbs, smiling. "GOD changes the will,"

"There is one other passage," added Mabel, "which I wish to quote; it is John 1:12: '**But to as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.**' Here we see CHRIST gave them power, power they did not have, power that had to be given before they could become the sons of GOD. This is exactly what the Doctor denies. Thus his theory contradicts the Word of GOD. Such a theory should be abandoned by all honest people."

The Doctor seemed more disconcerted than ever. "A noted commentary on this passage says: 'Gave He power.' The word signifies both authority and ability, and both are certainly meant

here. Here, then, is the meaning of this important passage, and it clearly substantiates my position and upsets the Doctor."

There was a momentary lull here, during which smiles of approval were seen, also sullen faces.

"I wish to speak of another passage," added Mabel. "In John 3:19-21, JESUS teaches that sinners love darkness and hate the light, and so are set against the light of the Gospel. **They are of those that rebel against the light**' (Job 24:13). Now put one in a dark room who loves darkness and hates light; then open the door and let the light stream in. What will he do? He will close the door and shut out the light which he hates. So the sinner shuts out the light of Gospel truth from his mind, as Job says, rebels against it, and shuts himself up in moral darkness."

"I have a question I wish to ask," said Arthur. "You have shown conclusively that man's nature is totally corrupt; now how was man's nature corrupted?"

"The Scripture is very plain on this point," replied Mabel. "Turn to Romans 5:12-19: **'By one man sin entered into the world.'** **'By one man's disobedience many were made sinners.'** Adam was this one man. His sin corrupted man's nature and leavened the whole lump of mankind."

"So we didn't make ourselves sinners?" inquired Arthur.

"No, we were sinners to start with," replied Mabel, "but we have made ourselves worse by practice."

"Then we are not responsible for our sinfulness," said the Doctor.

"It is a fact that we are sinners," replied Mr. Tibbs; "It is a fact that Adam made us sinners; it is also a fact that we are accountable, as Scripture and conscience both affirm,"

"Yes;" added Mabel, "the world is filled with misery as the result of Adam's transgression. When Adam fell earth gave signs of woe, that all was lost. All suffering is the result of somebody's sin. But the infant has never sinned, and yet it suffers and dies as certainly as adults. Its sufferings and death are the result, not of its sin, but of somebody's sin. We understand that the Bible teaches that sin inheres in the infant's being and is the disease that produces all of its troubles. This is the Bible explanation and the only satisfactory explanation of the matter. Adam represented us all - was to stand or fall for us all. He fell, and in him we all fell. **'By one man's disobedience all were made sinners.'** Romans 5:19. We were ruined by Adam and may be saved by CHRIST, the second Adam."

"It is all clear to my mind," said Arthur.

"Yes, as clear as a clouded sky," added the Doctor, ironically. "Nothing is clear to the Doctor," was the laconic reply of Mr. Tibbs.

"Now it is evident," continued Mabel, "something must be done for man in addition to atoning for his sins. If he is left to follow his natural inclinations he will never turn to GOD, but will live

and die in darkness and sin."

"So it seems," said Arthur, "as he is helpless in his blinding depravity. What must be done for him?"

"He must be born again," Mabel replied. "I mean his dark mind must be savingly enlightened, his dead soul quickened, his heart changed, his will renewed, his disposition altered. He must be so changed that he will hate what he now loves and love what he now hates. This great change is called the new birth and must be wrought by the Lord."

"Is this wholly GOD's work?" inquired Arthur.

"Yes, to be born of GOD is to have GOD do something for us. The sinner is dead in sin and so he is helpless. The change is supernatural; it is the work of GOD the Spirit, so says JESUS, John 3:6. Hence those born again are **"born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:13).

"Please state a little more fully in what this supernatural change consists," requested Mr. Tibbs.

"It consists in undoing and repairing the injury sin has done us. In regeneration the mind is savingly enlightened in knowledge of sin and of CHRIST; the will is so renewed that there is in the will an aversion to evil and a bent toward good; the affections are righted and regulated; the conscience is renewed, quickened, enlightened, instructed; so that regeneration makes one a new creation in CHRIST, old things are passed away and all things wear a different aspect to such a one."

"These statements," said Mr. Tibbs, as if thrilled with satisfaction, "are evidently both reasonable and Scriptural; they are plainly the teachings of the Word of GOD. The doctrine of total depravity is a Bible doctrine. How does it happen the Baptists hold the truth on all these points, anyhow? This is a matter that puzzles me."

"We got the truth in the beginning from CHRIST and the apostles," said Mabel. "We got into right paths then and have carried with us the light - that is, the Bible - to show us the right and wrong roads. There is no way for a people to hold the truth without a firm grip on the Word of GOD."

"There is yet one other question I wish discussed," said Mr. Tibbs. "It is the doctrine of Falling from Grace, or Final Perseverance. I will not be satisfied till I learn what the Word of GOD teaches on these lines."

"Come back, my friends, tomorrow evening and let us discuss this question also. We all want to know about it. Doctor, you and I have often argued falling from grace, and we believed our arguments could not be overthrown. For my part I believe some persons fall away and perish and that all are in danger of falling, and am sure this cannot be disproved." This was uttered by Mr. Clement. Quietly the congregation retired.

~ end of chapter 19 ~