

# Obstacles to Coming to Christ

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“No man can come to me.”—John 6:44

The natural man is unable to “Come to Christ.” Let us quote John 6:44: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” The reason why this is such a “hard saying, :” even unto thousands who profess to be Christians, is that they utterly fail to realize the terrible havoc which the Fall has wrought; and, it is greatly to be feared, they are themselves strangers to “the plague” of their own hearts (I Kings 8:38). Surely if the Spirit had ever awakened them from the sleep of spiritual death, and given them to see something of the dreadful state they are in by nature, and they had been brought to feel that the carnal mind *in them* was “enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7), then they would no longer cavil against this solemn word of Christ’s. But the spiritually dead can neither see nor feel spiritually.

Wherein lies the TOTAL INABILITY of the natural man? *It is not in the lack of the necessary faculties.* This needs to be plainly insisted upon, otherwise fallen man would cease to be a responsible creature. Fearful as were the effects of the Fall, they deprived man of none of the faculties with which God originally endowed him. True it is that the coming of sin took away from man all power to use those faculties aright, that is, to employ them for the Glory of the Maker. Nevertheless, fallen man possesses identically the same threefold nature, of spirit and soul and body, as he did before the Fall. No part of man’s being was annihilated, though each part was defiled and corrupted by sin. True, man died spiritually, but death is *alienation from God* (Eph. 4:18). The spiritually dead are very much alive and active in the service of Satan.

The inability of fallen man to “come to Christ” lies in no physical or mental defect. He has the same feet to take him unto a place where the gospel is preached as he has to walk to a tavern. He has the same eyes with which to read the Holy Scriptures as he has to read the world’s newspapers. He has the same lips and voice for calling upon God as he now uses in idle talk or foolish song. So, too, he has the same mental faculties for pondering the things of God and the concerns of eternity as he now uses to diligently in connection with his business. It is because of this that man is “without excuse.” It is the misuse of the faculties with which the creator has endowed him that increases man’s guilt. Let every servant of God see to it that these things are constantly pressed upon his unsaved hearers.

## **1. Man’s inability lies in his corrupt nature.**

We have to search deeper in order to find the seat of man’s spiritual impotency. Through Adam’s Fall, and through our own sin, our nature has become so debased and depraved that it is impossible for any man to “come to Christ,” to love Him and serve Him, to esteem Him more highly than all the world put together and submit to His rule, until the Spirit of God renews him and implants a New Nature. A bitter fountain cannot send forth sweet waters, nor an evil tree produce good fruit. Let us try to make this still clearer by an illustration. It is the *nature* of a vulture to feed upon carrion; true, it has the same bodily members to feed upon the wholesome grain that hens do, but it lacks the disposition and relish for it. It is the *nature* of a sow to wallow in the mire; true, it has the same legs as the sheep to conduct it to the meadow, but it lacks the desire for the green pastures. So it is with unregenerate man. He has the same physical and mental faculties as the regenerate have for the things and service of God, but he has no Love for them.

“Adam...begat a son in his own likeness, after his image” (Gen.5:3). What an awful contrast is found here with that which we read two verses before: “God created man, in the likeness of God made he him.” In the interval, Adam has fallen, and a fallen parent could beget only a fallen child, transmitting unto him his own depravity. “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?” (Job 14:4). Therefore do we find the sweet singer of Israel declaring, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Ps. 51:5). Though, later, grace made him the man after God’s own heart, yet by nature David was a mass of iniquity and sin (even as we). How early does this corruption of nature appear in children? “Even a child is known by his doings” (Prov. 20:11). The evil basis of its heart is soon manifested: pride, self-will, vanity, lying, aversions to good, are the bitter fruits which quickly appear on the tender but corrupt twig.

## **2. Man’s inability lies in the complete darkness of his understanding.**

This leading faculty of the soul has been .2with confusion. Both mind and conscience are defiled: "There is none that understandeth" (Rom.3:11). Solemnly did the apostle remind the saints, "Ye were sometimes darkness" (Eph. 5:8), not merely "in darkness" but "darkness" itself. "Sin has closed the windows of the soul, darkness is over all the region: it is the land of darkness and shadow of death, where the light is as darkness. The prince of darkness reigns there, and nothing but the works of darkness are framed there. We are born spiritually blind, and cannot be restored without a miracle of grace. This is thy case whoever thou art, that art not born again" (Thomas Boston, 1680). "They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge" (Jer. 4:22).

"The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be" (Rom.8:7). There is in the unregenerate *an opposition* to spiritual things and an aversion against them. God has made a revelation of His will unto sinners touching the way of salvation, yet they will not walk therein. They hear that Christ alone is able to save, yet they refuse to part with those things that hinder their coming to Him. They hear that it is sin which slays the soul, and yet they cherish it in their bosoms. they heed not the threatenings of God. Men believe that fire will burn them, and are at great pains to avoid it; yet they slow by their actions that they regard the everlasting burnings as a mere scarecrow. The divine commandments are "*holy, just and good,*" but men hate them, and observe them only so far as their respectability among men is promoted.

### **3. Man's inability lies in the complete corruption of his affections.**

"Man as he is, before he receives the grace of God, loves anything and everything above spiritual things. If you want proof of this, look around you. There needs no monument to the depravity of the human affections. Cast your eyes everywhere. There is not a street, nor a house, nay, nor a heart, which doth not bear upon it sad evidence of this dreadful truth. Why is it that men are not found on the Lord's Day universally flocking to the house of God? Why are we not more constantly found reading our Bibles? How is it that prayer is a duty almost universally neglected? Why is Christ Jesus so little loved? Why are even His professed followers so cold in their affections to Him? Whence arise these things? Assuredly, dear brethren, we can trace them to no other source than this, the corruption and perversion of the affections. We love that which we ought to hate, and we hate that which we ought to love. It is but human nature, fallen human nature, that men should love this present life better than the life to come. It is but this effect of the Fall, that man should love sin better than the ways of God." (C. H.. Spurgeon, sermon on John 6:44).

The affections of the unrenewed man are *wholly depraved and distempered*. "The heart is deceitful above all thing, and desperately wicked" (Jer. 17:9). Solemnly did the Lord Jesus affirm that the affections of fallen man are a mother of abomination: "For from within [not from the devil], out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness" (Mark 7:21-22). The natural man's affections are wretchedly misplaced; he is a Spiritual Monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed on the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on (Acts 9:5). His face is toward hell, his back toward heaven; and therefore God calls to him to turn. He joys in what he ought to mourn over, and mourns over what he should rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor (Prov 2:13-15). (From Boston's Fourfold State).

### **4. His inability lies in the total perversity of his will.**

"Oh," said the Arminian, "men may be saved if they will." We reply, "My dear sir, we all believe that; but it is just that - *if they will* - that is the difficulty." We assert that no man will come to Christ unless he be drawn; nay, we do not assert it, but Christ himself declares it - "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life" (John 5:40); and as long as that "ye will not come" stands on record in the Holy Scripture, we shall not be brought to believe in any doctrine of the freedom of the human will. "It is strange how people, when talking about freewill, talk of things which they do not at all understand. "Now," says one, "I believe man can be saved if he will." But that is not the question at all. The question is, are men ever found Naturally willing to submit to the humbling terms of the gospel of Christ? We declare, upon Scriptural authority, that the human will is so desperately set on mischief, so depraved, and so inclined to everything that is evil, and so disinclined to everything that is good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible influence of the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever be constrained toward Christ" (C. H.. Spurgeon).

“Now here is a threefold cord against heaven and holiness, not easily to be broken; a blind man, a perverse will, and disorderly, distempered affections. The mind, swelled with self-conceit, says the man *should not* stoop; the will, opposite the will of God, says *will not*; and the corrupt affections arising against the Lord in defense of the corrupt will says he *shall not*. Thus the poor creature stands out against God and goodness, until the day of power come, in which he is made a new creature” (T. Boston).

Perhaps some readers are inclined to say, “Such teaching as this is calculated to discourage sinners and drive them to despair.” Our answer is: *First*, that it is according to God’s Word! *Second*, oh that it may please Him to use this truth to drive some to despair of all help from themselves. *Third*, it makes manifest the Absolute necessity of the Holy Spirit’s working with such depraved and spiritually helpless creatures, if they are ever to come savingly to Christ. And until this is clearly perceived, *His* aid will never be *really* sought in earnest!