

## Human Imperfection

(Ecclesiastes 7:20).

### INTRODUCTION:

1. If you know me, you know I am personally acquainted with the subject this morning, which is human imperfection!
2. The Text (Eccl. 7:20 – “Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.”).
  - A. This text presents a very sobering thought echoed throughout the Bible: humans are imperfect, sinful creatures.
    - i. “...for there is no man who does not sin” (2 Chronicles 6:36).
    - ii. “For in Your sight no man living is righteous” (Psalms 143:2).
    - iii. “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; <sup>10</sup> as it is written, “There is none righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; <sup>12</sup> All have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.” (Romans 3:9-12).
  - B. The truth of our text is emphasized in the fact that even the greatest men mentioned in the Bible were imperfect.
    - i. Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and Peter all have their sin recorded in the scriptures.
    - ii. Of course, there is one exception, Jesus.
  - C. Otherwise, it is the simple truth that people are imperfect, and they sin.
3. How should we use this truth?
  - A. We could try to use it as an excuse for sin, because “nobody is perfect.”
    - i. From my own experience, we actually tend to do this more than we might like to admit.
    - ii. Thinking this way is not wise (2 Cor. 10:12 – “...but when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding.”).
  - B. We might use this as an excuse for giving up the fight for a holy life, thinking “What’s the use?”
    - i. Although I understand that frustration well, to do that would have eternally bad results!
    - ii. We must remember that Christ understands our failures and can help us (Heb. 2:17-18 – “Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> For **since He Himself was tempted** in that which He has suffered, **He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.**”).
4. With these things in mind, I want to consider some helpful ways we can approach this common but unfortunate reality of humanity.

### DISCUSSION:

#### **I. Our imperfection should produce meekness**

- A. That is because our sin leaves us in an undesirable position before God.
  1. We have fallen short of our intended purpose of glorifying God in holiness (Rom. 3:23 – “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”).
  2. Our failure has caused us spiritual death (Rom. 6:23 – “For the wages of sin is death...”).
- B. It is very important for us to acknowledge our sin.
  1. Why, because we must seek God’s forgiveness. When Christ taught the disciples to pray, one of the key points was to ask God to “forgive us our sins” (Luke 11:4).
  2. We should not try to hide our sin!
    - a. God already knows about them (Psalms 69:5 – “O God, it is You who knows my folly, And my wrongs are not hidden from You.”).
    - b. Hiding them, as did David, is futile and will likely result in self-condemning hypocrisy.
      - i. Remember when David tried to hide his sin against Bathsheba and Uriah and God sent Nathan to him.

- ii. David was told a story of a man who was rich but took the one lamb of a poor man to feed his guest (2 Samuel 12:4-7 – “Now a traveler came to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take from his own flock or his own herd, to prepare for the wayfarer who had come to him; rather he took the poor man’s ewe lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him.”<sup>5</sup> Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.<sup>6</sup> He must make restitution for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.”<sup>7</sup> Nathan then said to David, “**You are the man!**...”).
- 3. Our imperfections should help us see that same condemnation applies to us and in meekness confess our sins (1 Jn. 1:9 – “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”).

## II. Our imperfection should help us see others’ sin differently

- A. This, again, can only be true if we are willing to acknowledge our sin (1 Jn. 1:10 – “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.”).
  - 1. So, we must fight the tendency to condone in ourselves what we condemn in others (Matthew 7:1-3, 5 – “Do not judge so that you will not be judged.<sup>2</sup> For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.<sup>3</sup> Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?...<sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.”).
  - 2. So, all judgment of sin and faithfulness must begin with us (2 Corinthians 13:5 – “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test?”).
  - 3. Unless we are willing to show grace to others, God will not show grace to us (Matt. 6:14-15 – “For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.<sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.”).
- B. We should not take the wrong view of sin.
  - 1. Paul teaches that we must not be tolerant of sin, even if we think it will somehow lead to God’s glory (Rom. 6:1-2 – “What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin so that grace may increase?<sup>2</sup> May it never be! How shall we who died to sin still live in it?”).
  - 2. We cannot compromise and allow one another to live in sin (1 Cor. 5:1-2 – “It is actually reported that there is immorality among you, and immorality of such a kind as does not exist even among the Gentiles, that someone has his father’s wife.<sup>2</sup> You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead, so that the one who had done this deed would be removed from your midst.”).
- C. Instead, we must follow Jesus by being understanding, compassionate, and merciful toward the weak and erring as we with firmness and gentleness seek to help them forsake their sin (Hebrews 2:17-18).

## III. Our imperfection should help us not think too highly of others

- A. That may sound bad, but what I mean is that the reality of human imperfection should keep us from connecting our *faith in Christ* to the actions of others.
  - 1. The only person said to have committed no sin is Jesus (Heb. 4:15 – “For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, **yet without sin**”; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Peter 2:22).
  - 2. Humans can be blameless, but are not perfect.
    - a. There have been many recognized as “blameless” (i.e., **Zacharias/Elizabeth** – Luke 1:6; **faithful Christians** – 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 2:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Peter 3:14; **Elders** – 1 Timothy 3:2, 10; Titus 1:6–7).
    - b. But there is a significant difference in being blameless and being perfect. Blamelessness comes through a combination of obedience and forgiveness from God.

- c. The only stock we can put in men is when they truly follow Christ.
  - i. 1 Corinthians 11:1 – “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”
  - ii. Philippians 3:17 – “Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”
- B. Since every human being will eventually fail in one way or another, this forces us to put our faith in Jesus as the only perfect model.
  - 1. Too many *lose their faith* because they are disappointed by the actions of some preacher, elder, or member whom they admired.
  - 2. Yet, our faith must “not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:5), so that even if the entire congregation was to become bad, we could remain faithful.

#### IV. Human imperfection should make us depend on Jesus and His grace

- A. We, like Paul, should acknowledge God’s grace in our lives to forgive, redeem, and save.
  - 1. Ephesians 2:4-8 – “But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God”
  - 2. Titus 2:11–14 – “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, <sup>12</sup> instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, <sup>13</sup> looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus, <sup>14</sup> who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.”
- B. For, Paul knew well his past life of sinful rebellion against Jesus and his dependence upon the mercy and grace of God to save him! (1 Corinthians 15:9-10 – “For I am the least of the apostles, and not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.”).
  - 1. The words of John Newton, who though a member of the Anglican church, illustrates the disposition of mind we must acquire (from **Stories for Preachers**).
  - 2. Upon choosing a portion of scripture to read with a friend and brother, in it occurred the verse, ‘By the grace of God, I am what I am’ (1 Corinthians 15:10). After its reading he stated, ‘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.’”
  - 3. Very fitting and true words for all that live in Christ.
- C. Because we depend on Christ for everything, there is no room for pride.
  - 1. 1 Cor. 4:6-7 – “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, so that in us you may learn not to exceed what is written, so that no one of you will become arrogant in behalf of one against the other. <sup>7</sup> For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?”
  - 2. 1 Corinthians 1:31 – “just as it is written, “LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.”

#### V. Human imperfection should cause us to cultivate...

- A. Vigilance in guarding our walk upon this earth.
  - 1. We recently did some hiking at FCF, and I can say that as I get older and the threat of a fall

- and the damage it can do have become much more real. So, I am very careful how I walk.
2. Knowing that I tend to stumble spiritually should cause me to be careful how I walk in service to God (Rom. 13:13-14 – “Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup> But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.”).
- B. Confidence and avoid despair.
1. Now I know that sounds contradictory, maybe even crazy.
  2. But the realization of our imperfections should help keep our focus on God!
    - a. God did not cast off Abraham, Moses, David, Peter, etc., because they sinned.
    - b. And He will not do so now for those who with a humble, contrite, and penitent heart seek his grace to help in times of need (Heb. 4:14-16 – ‘Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. <sup>15</sup> For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. <sup>16</sup> Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”).
- C. Endurance to finish the spiritual race.
1. Winning athletes are those who though blessed by God with talent, also know their weaknesses and work hard to overcome them.
    - a. They know what it takes to be successful and are willing to make the sacrifices needed to achieve that goal.
    - b. Christians are to be the same (1 Cor. 9:24-27 – “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. <sup>25</sup> Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. <sup>26</sup> Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; <sup>27</sup> but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”).
  2. Salvation depends on faith that endures and obeys (Hebrews 10:36-38 – “Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. <sup>36</sup> For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. <sup>37</sup> For yet in a very little while, He who is coming will come, and will not delay. <sup>38</sup> But My righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”).
  3. We must keep our eye on the prize (2 Timothy 4:6-8 – “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; <sup>8</sup> in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.”).

#### CONCLUSION:

1. Human imperfections, especially spiritual ones, put us all in the same boat before God and make us dependent upon Him for our hope and salvation.
2. The difference between the Christian and the high-handed sinner is the way one responds to that fact.
  - A. One who would be a Christian will repent and renounce his wrongs, while the other does not.
  - B. The Christian loathes his sins, seeks to be righteous, and longs for a time when he will be completely rid of sin. The sinner, however, does not consider his ways nor their implications.
3. Which picture describes you? Do you know your imperfection and realize your need for Jesus?
4. If so, will you come to Him in F-R-C-Bp?