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Corruption Is a State of Mind

Reflections Grace, Sin and Transformation 3 September 2014

Romans 8:21

Psalms 119:1-3

Matthew 23:27-28

Micah 6:8

The overt debates on 'corruption' doing the rounds incline me to believe that the world is entirely swayed by this negative phase through which it is passing. It is almost as if we have reached a dead end, and everything that is good has been utterly debased. The relentless portrayal of anything and everything, in haste and with sketchy investigation, as corruption — by the press, television, social media, politicians, and some self-proclaimed intelligentsia — forces us to become short-sighted in our views. In the process, we are compelled to overlook the reformation and progress that is happening around us. I believe that Jesus would not permit His creation to remain corrupted.

"Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." — Romans 8:21 (KJV)

The total eradication of this malady may take a long time, and I believe it will come about only through divine intervention. The problem, therefore, needs to be looked at from a biblical perspective.

The dictionary lists a great many synonyms for 'corruption': bribery, extortion, dishonesty, fraud, criminality, venality, immorality, depravity, vice, wickedness, sin, iniquity, degeneracy, perversion, debauchery, decadence, impurity, contamination, adulteration, and falsification, among others.

While such a list is exhaustive, dealing with all these forms at once is, indeed, a daunting prospect. The subject of corruption requires a broader approach, one that can be undertaken only when we view the problem in a straightforward and practical manner. I want to argue that the many varieties of corruption stem from a single root problem, though varying circumstances may cause it to manifest in different forms. I find that one common definition comes very close to the root of this malady: that corruption, in philosophical, theological or moral

terms, is a spiritual or moral impurity, or a deviation from an ideal. Let us match that with the Psalmist's words:

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways." — Psalm 119:1-3 (KJV)

The 'ideal' here is plainly 'His ways', and the ways of Jesus are wholly pure. Those who walk with Jesus with the whole heart will be without blemish, and will be blessed with purity of mind and thought. When a person is in that state, they are not prone to be corrupt, nor to corrupt others. I may not, therefore, be wrong in saying that corruption is a state of mind. Depending upon the state of one's relationship with Christ, or the lack of it, one is either corrupt or not corrupt; there is no such state as being more or less corrupt.

Corruption, however, is not a new phenomenon. Its first signs are evident in the disobedience of Adam and Eve, when Satan planted the seeds of corruption in their minds. The book of Genesis amply portrays the transition of humanity from a truly close relationship with God to a disconnection between God and man; their daily walk with God in the garden came to an abrupt end. From that time, corruption manifested itself in its fiercest forms. The Israelites, called to be a people set apart for God, defied Him time and again; the Old Testament is full of corruption of every kind — social, spiritual and moral — in which mankind indulged. This is the very reason God the Son, Jesus, had to come to the earth.

Remember how Jesus described the corruption in those who claimed to be religious and spiritual leaders:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity." — Matthew 23:27-28 (KJV)

Corruption, therefore, is not an external matter, but a condition of what lies within us, in our minds. The classic example of corruption, akin to the corruption of our own contemporary times, is the betrayal of Jesus by Judas for thirty pieces of silver. Judas must have suffered an inner conflict, as we all do, while he was contemplating what he was about to do. We may discern the corruption of his mind; it must have so overborne him that it won a temporary victory over his spirit. I say temporary, because within hours of his dreadful act, that corruption

gave way to remorse, and he ended his own life.

We need to find an answer to this problem, which continues to beset the world. It cannot, however, be dealt with effectively and permanently at an organisational level, nor by taking each instance of corruption one at a time. Reformation must begin with the individual, and the Gospel lays out clearly the principle for an uncorrupted life. The fitting conclusion to this brief essay would be a word from the prophet Micah:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" — Micah 6:8 (KJV)

Amen.

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