

DISTINCTIVES OF GRACE
Bible Study Notes #2, August 21, 2005

Depravity

Grand Experiment

Broadcaster Paul Harvey told a version of the following story on the radio many years ago.

There was an old man who was a great admirer of democracy and public education. So close to his heart did he hold both institutions that he tried to bring them together into one grand experiment, a public college where students would practice self-governance. There would be no regulations; the goodwill and judgment of the students would suffice. After years of planning, the school was finally opened. The old man was overjoyed.

But as the months went by, students proved time and time again that they were not the models of discipline and discernment the old man envisioned. They skipped classes, drank to excess, and wasted hours in frivolous pursuits. One night, 14 students, disguised by masks and “animated with wine,” went on a rampage that ended in a brawl. One struck a professor with a brick, and another used a cane on his victim.

In response, the college’s trustees convened a special meeting. The old man, now 82 years old and very frail, was asked to address the student body. In his remarks, he recalled the lofty principles upon which the college had been founded. He said he had expected more—much more—from the students. He even confessed that this was the most painful event of his life. Suddenly, he stopped speaking. Tears welled up in his failing eyes. He was so overcome with grief that he sat down, unable to go on.

His audience was so touched that at the conclusion of the meeting the 14 offenders stepped forward to admit their guilt. But they could not undo the damage already done. A strict code of conduct and numerous onerous regulations were instituted at the college. The old man’s experiment had failed. Why? **Because he took for granted the one essential ingredient necessary for success: *virtue*.** Only a virtuous people can secure and maintain their freedom.

A short time later, on the Fourth of July, the old man passed away. Engraved on his tombstone were the simple words that reflected the success and failure of his most important experiments: “**Thomas Jefferson**, author of the Declaration of Independence and father of the University of Virginia.” Now, as Mr. Harvey says, you know the rest of the story.

Our subject is **Total Depravity**, or perhaps better termed **Radical Depravity!** Our depravity is “**total**” as opposed to “**partial**,” and our natures are **radically corrupted**.

As R. C. Sproul once said, "Man is very, very **bad** and God is very, very **mad**." The doctrine or teaching of Total or Radical Depravity explains the Biblical concept of sin. We know the Bible is a book of *theology*, (or a study of God), but we should also be aware that the Bible is also a book of anthropology (or a study of man). It addresses such questions as:

- What is the basic nature of man? Is this nature good or evil?
- Does man sin because he is a sinner by nature, or because he was raised in an environment of sin and learned to sin?
- If he is born a sinner, or is forced to sin by his environment or training, how can he be responsible for his sin?
- What is the impact or result of this sin and nature? Is he partially or totally corrupted by sin? Is he capable of some good and some evil? How can he deal with this sin and nature?

Psalms 14:1 "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good."

You will notice that the words "*there is*" are italicized. That indicates that the words were added by the translators to make the passage read more smoothly. However, in this case, the added words are a detriment rather than a help. The text should not read, "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God," but simply, "The fool hath said in his heart, No, God," or "The fool hath said in his heart, No, to God."

If David had said, "The fool hath said in his heart, *There is* no God," that would be a direct contradiction of Paul's teaching in Romans 1 and 2. Paul tells us plainly that there is no such thing as an atheist. There are many fools who would like to be atheists, and try to be. But all who claim to be atheists are liars. The Apostle Paul, writing by Divine inspiration, tells us that all men are born with a God consciousness from which they can never escape.

So when David writes, "The fool hath said in his heart, No, God," or "No, to God," he is not suggesting that some men really are atheists. Not at all. David is telling us that all men are foolish rebels by nature, constantly shaking their fists in God's face and saying, "No, God!" Now, read Psalm 14:1-3. You will see that what I have said exactly fits the context.

Psalms 14:1-3 "The fool hath said in his heart, **No, God!** They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, *there is* none that doeth good. (2) The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, *and* seek God. (3) They are all gone aside, they are *all* together become filthy: *there is* none that doeth good, no, not one."

In these three verses, the Holy Spirit describes the character and condition of all human beings by nature since the fall of Adam.

Here are seven facts about the entire human race.

1. All human beings are, by nature, rebellious fools, fools for their rebellion, for man's rebellion is against God Almighty!
2. The whole human race is corrupt, abominable, and filthy before God.

3. We all became corrupt, abominable, and filthy at one time, by Adam's one act of rebellion and treason against God.
4. We all, at one time, turned away from God. - In the same manner of our father Adam we willfully, deliberately turned away from our God.
5. Because of Adam's sin and our sin in him, the entire human race has become totally ignorant of all things spiritual. - *"There is none that understandeth!"*
6. No one left to himself will ever truly seek the Lord. - *"There is none that seeketh after God."*
7. And no one has the ability to do anything that is good and acceptable to God. - *"There is none that doeth good..." "There is none that doeth good, no, not one."*

The Spirit of God tells us that man is, by nature, a totally depraved, helpless, perishing creature. The Scriptures plainly teach the doctrine of man's total depravity. We take our doctrine directly from the Word of God. The basis of our faith is the Word of God alone. We do not build our doctrine upon human opinion, reason, and logic, church tradition, historic creeds, confessions, and catechisms, or denominational history and tradition, but upon *Thus saith the Lord.*" All that we believe we believe because it is plainly stated in the Word of God.

Of course, this is the **first of the five "lesser" distinctives of grace**, or the first of the doctrines of grace, or the first of the five points of Calvinism. This doctrine or teaching is sometimes referred to as the **"root principle."** Why? **The other points flow logically from and grow from the base of this understanding about the nature of man.**

HISTORY of the Debate: Since man has been in sin, there have **always been two camps** on this subject, (as there is on most any issue). Those who believe that man is still basically good, that being created in the image of God endows him with some natural goodness and virtue, that he is born basically innocent and must grow out of it, and that he has the capacity to recognize, understand and respond to the spiritual truth of the gospel and be saved. The others are those who believe that man is corrupt totally in all his being (mind, will and emotions), that we both sinners by nature and deed, and that apart from the grace of God we are hopelessly lost and would never come to God or obey His command to be saved. These two camps are often not even known to many Christians, but everyone has made a choice in this debate, whether we realize it or not.

In the fourth and fifth centuries, the two camps were labeled Pelagian and Augustinian, after a British monk named **Pelagius**, or the great theologian **Augustine** of Hippo (north Africa). Augustine wrote a prayer that was circulated throughout the early church, that said, "Lord command what Thou wilt, and give what Thou command." Pelagius disagreed sharply with the implications of this prayer and said "If I ought, I can." So from the beginning, the stage was set about the depths of man's condition and how much grace was needed from God to deal with it.

Later, in the sixteenth century and the early days of the Protestant Reformation, the two central figures became the German humanist Desiderius **Eramus** and the German theologian Martin **Luther**. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the camps took

up the names of Jacobus **Arminius** and John **Calvin** (Arminians and Calvinists). After both of these men were dead, the debate reached a climax when the Arminians petitioned the Dutch church with their Remonstrance or objections to the teachings of the Reformed church. A Synod or court was called in 1618 in Dort to deal with these objections. Because these objections and attempts to revise the Biblical doctrines were deemed so dangerous by the church, they decided to issue a formal response to their five points, which have become known as these five points of Calvinism. Neither Calvin nor the church ever taught these as distinct points of doctrine, but rather saw them as basic Biblical views of the Scripture held since the beginning of the church.

Later on, in the eighteenth century it was John **Wesley** versus Jonathan **Edwards** or George Whitefield. The great Baptist preacher of London, Charles Haddon **Spurgeon** was another to weigh in on the side of Augustine. Basically the denominations from the 1600's until the middle of the 1900's were all divided on this issue between the Methodists, the Nazarenes, the Wesleyans, the Free Will Baptists, the Pentecostals and others like the Jehovah Witnesses and the Church of Christ on the side of Pelagius and the Baptists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Puritans, and others on the side of Augustine.

Sometime around the middle of the 20th century, the divide and debate became confused and complicated, as many Baptists, charismatics and other modern day evangelicals adopted the doctrine of the Arminians without professing it, and historic Augustinianism or Calvinism was rejected, caricatured and made into something shallow, silly and trite. The modern evangelistic movements quietly pushed these historic teachings into an anathema or accursed doctrine, so that today it is either not addressed at all or automatically agreed to without any understanding of its meaning and impact on the gospel and salvation.

SO, does the Bible clearly and plainly teach that all the human race is totally depraved? We appeal to no authority except the Word of God. Let's see and hear what God says in his Holy Word about this subject:

Ephes. 4:18 (NASB)

being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;

1 Cor. 2:14 (NASB)

But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is darkened and without understanding, and cannot understand spiritual things.**

John 12:40 (NASB)

"He has BLINDED THEIR EYES, AND He HARDENED THEIR HEART; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and BE CONVERTED, AND I heal them."

2 Cor. 4:4 (NASB)

in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is blinded (by both Satan and GOD) and cannot see the good news of the glory of Christ.**

Romans 8:5-7 (NASB)

For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. [6] For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, [7] because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so;

Romans 1:30 (NASB)

slanderers, **haters of God**, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

John 3:19 (NASB)

"And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil.

- So what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is hostile toward God, an enemy of God, even a hater of God, and loves darkness rather than the light.**

Titus 3:3 (NASB)

For we also once were foolish ourselves, disobedient, deceived, enslaved to various lusts and pleasures, spending our life in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another.

John 8:34 (NASB)

Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

- So what do these two verses teach about man's condition? **He is a slave to his own lusts and pleasures, a slave to sin.**

2 Tim. 3:13 (NASB)

But evil men and impostors will proceed **from bad to worse**, deceiving and being deceived.

Romans 1:24-32 (NASB)

Therefore **God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity**, that their bodies might be dishonored among them. [25] For they exchanged the truth of God for a

lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

[26] For this reason **God gave them over to degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, [27] and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

[28] And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over to a depraved mind**, to do those things which are not proper, [29] being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, [30] slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, [31] without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; [32] and, **although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

- So what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is often in a state of "devolution" descending from one sin to another of growing depravity, or progressive corruption!**

Ephes. 2:1-5 (NASB)

And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, [2] in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. [3] Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. [4] But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, [5] even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

- Finally what do these verses teach about man's condition? **He is DEAD in his trespasses and sins, and by nature children of wrath.**
- **SO,**
- **What can someone who cannot understand spiritual things do to understand spiritual things?**
- **What can someone who is "blind" do to have sight?**
- **What can someone who is an enemy and hates their enemy, do to become loved by their enemy and love them back?**
- **What can someone who is a slave and destitute in poverty do to buy themselves back and be made free?**
- **What can someone who is in the nosedive of progressive corruption do to turn around and pursue righteousness?**
- **What can someone who is DEAD do to make themselves alive?**

Mark 7:21-22 (NASB) Jesus said:

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, [22] deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.

Isaiah 53:6 (NASB)

All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.

Isaiah 64:6 (NASB)

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And **all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment**; (So *what about our sins?*) And all of us wither like a leaf; And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

Romans 3:10-18 (NASB) God taught very clear anthropology through Paul a re-emphasis of Psalm 14:

as it is written, "There is none righteous, not even one; [11] There is none who understands, There is none who seeks for God; [12] All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, There is not even one." [13] "Their throat is an open grave, With their tongues they keep deceiving," "The poison of asps is under their lips"; [14] "Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness"; [15] "Their feet are swift to shed blood, [16] Destruction and misery are in their paths, [17] And the path of peace have they not known." [18] "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

- **Please note that this does not mean that we are as bad as we can be, nor that all men are equally bad, nor that men cannot do some good things in the eyes of their fellow man.**
- **Arminians would define "Free Will" as a power to initiate a relationship with God.**

This is manifested in the modern day approaches to evangelism. Ralph Carmichael wrote a famous "invitation song entitled "*The Savior is Waiting.*" It says, "if you'll take the first step toward the Savior my friend you'll find the His arms open wide." Well the issue is not whether His arms are open wide or not (they are in a figurative sense). But the issue is whether or not we are able to take that first step or not.

Example of man "falling": Compare a fall from a second story window that leaves one broken, injured and in need of help, to a fall from the top of the Sears tower that leaves one splattered on the street and DEAD. He doesn't need help, he needs life, regeneration,AMAZING GRACE!

- The **Law** helps us to understand this teaching about our sin natures. It leads us to see our desperate condition and need in light of the Standard.

Eccles. 7:20 (NASB)

Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.

Eccles. 9:3 (NASB)

This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is one fate for all men. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.

Jeremiah 17:9 (NASB)

"The heart is more deceitful than all else, And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?

John 8:44 (NASB)

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

Romans 14:23 (NASB)

But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and **whatever is not from faith is sin.**

- What is the "Standard?" **God's righteousness, *not our own is the standard.***
- Given choices, (apart from the grace of God) man will always choose based upon his nature. Between **good or evil; obedience or rebellion; life or death; God or self or Satan;** natural man will always choose the latter in every case.
- So, what is our hope? Are we without hope and in despair? **How can we be saved from this body of death?**

Romans 5:12, 19 (NASB) (The source of sin and death)

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned--

[19] For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

1 Cor. 15:22 (NASB) (the source of life)

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive.

John 6:44 (NASB) (the Savior Who draws us to life)

"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.

Matthew 5:48 (NASB) (Here is "the Standard")

"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 19:26 (NASB) (Here is the solution!)

And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

These passages of Holy Scripture are but a very few of the many, many statements in God's Word about the total depravity of the human race. They stand without comment, declaring that all men are by nature **radically depraved**. To deny what these texts declare is to deny the Word of God. To argue against the doctrine of Total or Radical Depravity is to be found fighting against God himself!

Proposition: The Word of God plainly and universally teaches that all human beings are, since the fall of Adam, born in a state of total depravity: lost, corrupt at heart, condemned under the curse of God's holy law, and utterly incapable of removing that curse or changing their condition.

In fact, as we shall see, man's depravity is so thorough and complete that he cannot even make any contribution toward removing the curse of the law, or changing his condition. Fallen man cannot even make a move toward God, much less bring himself back to God!

Divisions: I want to be as crystal clear in stating the doctrine of man's Total Depravity as I possibly can. Unless we have a clear understanding about the depravity of man, we cannot have a clear understanding about any other gospel truth. So I ask you to give me your careful attention as I show you five things revealed in the Word of God about man's **Total Depravity**.

1. Man by nature is a fallen creature (Eccles. 7:29).
2. We were all born with a decided bias toward evil, with an utter hatred of God (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 8:7).
3. No one has the ability to save himself by his own works (Gal 2:16).
4. No one has the will, desire or ability to come to Christ by faith (John 5:40; 6:44).
5. The only hope for depraved sinners is the free and sovereign grace of God in Christ (Rom. 9:15-16).

Applications:

- No man has any claim upon the grace of God.
- Any sinner who will come to Christ may freely come.
- All who come to Christ in true faith acknowledge most gladly that they were constrained to come.
- We who have been constrained by almighty, irresistible grace into the arms of Christ, do most gladly acknowledge and praise him for his matchless, free grace.

This is what I am saying - The whole of my salvation and yours, from start to finish, is due entirely to the grace of God.

All that I was, my sin, my guilt,
My death was all my own:

All that I am, I owe to Thee,
 My gracious God, alone.
 The evil of my former state
 Was mine, and only mine:
 The good in which I now rejoice
 Is Thine, and only Thine.
 The darkness of my former state,
 The bondage - All was mine:
 The light of life in which I walk,
 The liberty is Thine.
 The grace that made me feel my sin
 It taught me to believe:
 Then, in believing, peace I found,
 And now I live, I live!
 All that I am, even here on earth,
 All that I hope to be,
 When Jesus comes, and glory dawns,
 I owe it, Lord, to Thee!
"By the grace of God I am what I am." Amen.

Applications & Questions:

1. What does Total Depravity say about the goodness of man?
2. What does Total Depravity say about the need of man?
3. What does Total Depravity say about the innocence of man at birth or until the "age of accountability?"
4. What does Total Depravity change about popular evangelism techniques?
5. What does Total Depravity teach us about our struggles with the "flesh," or the process of sanctification?

Popular Religion

"Until we believe that we are as bad as God says we are, we can never believe that He will do for us what He says He will do. Right here is where popular religion breaks down." - A. W. Tozer

No one knows the one-hundredth part of the sin that clings to his soul. - John Calvin

Property Laws of a Toddler

(Evidences of Original Sin) Test this on the toddlers in your home or church this Christmas!

1. If I like it, it's mine.
2. If it's in my hand, it's mine.
3. If I can take it from you, it's mine.
4. If I had it a little while ago, it's mine.
5. If it's mine, it must never appear to be yours in any way.
6. If I'm doing or building something, all the pieces are mine.
7. If it looks just like mine, it's mine.
8. If I saw it first, it's mine.
9. If you are playing with something and you put it down, it automatically becomes mine.
10. If it's broken, it's yours

Illustration of serviceman captured by the Iraqis in the Gulf War: He said he never lost hope, because he **"always believed in the basic goodness of man!"**

"We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners!"

"It is not that we MAY not come to Christ on our own, but that we CAN not!"

We cannot understand light until we comprehend (total) darkness. We cannot understand truth until we comprehend error. We cannot understand blessing until we comprehend wrath. We cannot understand God's holiness until we comprehend our depravity! We cannot understand God's grace in salvation until we comprehend our helplessness to do any part! We cannot understand gratitude until we comprehend what we have been given.

Illustration of local businessman's view on the selfish motive of all people to do anything. **"Everyone does whatever they do for what they can get out of it!"** Proper view of man's total depravity from a natural perspective!

Message in Tee Shirts: ***There is a God, and you are not Him!***

Message in SCC song: ***"God is God, and I am not!"***

Illustration of **Ed Pitts**: David Kadle said "I have never known a man who more exemplified what it meant to be a Christian." **He always knew Who God was and who he was not! (He understood "amazing grace," even for such a one as he; how much more for me!)**

Expanded Notes:

1. First, I want you to see that **MAN BY NATURE IS A FALLEN CREATURE** (Eccles. 7:29).

Ecclesiastes 7:29 "Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man (Adam) upright; but they have sought out many inventions."

When the Lord God created our father Adam, things were far, far different from the way they are now.

- **God created Adam in perfect righteousness.**
- **He had no original sin.**
- **He had no inclination or bias toward sin.**
- **God placed Adam in a perfectly sinless environment in the garden.**
- **By God's decree, Adam was the federal head and representative of the entire human race.**

God deals with only two men: The first Adam and the Second Adam (1 Cor. 15:22, 45-49).

1 Corinthians 15:22 "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

1 Corinthians 15:45-49 "And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam *was made* a quickening spirit. (46) Howbeit that *was* not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. (47) The first man *is* of the earth, earthy: the second man *is* the Lord from heaven. (48) As *is* the earthy, such *are* they also that are earthy: and as *is* the heavenly, such *are* they also that are heavenly. (49) And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

When the Lord put Adam in the Garden, whatever Adam did would be imputed to all who are in him by nature.

- If Adam obeyed God, his righteous obedience would be confirmed and imputed to all his children.
- If Adam disobeyed God and broke the covenant, his sin would be imputed to all his children.
- **Our father, Adam sinned against God, broke his covenant, and plunged himself and the entire human race into spiritual death, sin, and eternal condemnation** (Gen. 2:15-17; Rom. 5:12-19).

That is what we have seen in the last three studies. Man by nature is a fallen creature.

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

2. Secondly, I want you to see that the Word of God plainly teaches us that - **ALL MEN, SINCE THE FALL OF ADAM, ARE BORN WITH A DECIDED BIAS TOWARD EVIL, WITH AN UTTER HATRED OF GOD** (Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 8:7).

Mark 7:21-23 Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that - "*From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness,*

wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Sin is not a social disease. It is not something a man has to learn, or be taught. It is the inbred family disease of our race. It is a matter of the heart. Because our hearts are evil, we do evil. The evil tendencies of our hearts are guarded, restrained, and kept in check by many things. But the seeds of evil are in our hearts by nature. This is what our Lord tells us. All men, regardless of age, actions, or social standing, are vile, loathsome, and corrupt at heart. This must be evidently true to any reasonable man.

- History tells us that man is a depraved creature.
- Our daily newspapers tells you that man is depraved.
- We see clear evidence of human depravity in our most darling children.
- Every man's conscience testifies of his depravity.
- Every true believer has a constant painful reminder of human depravity in his own heart.

Man is not good, but evil at heart. This world is what it is because man is what he is, sinful, depraved, and vile.

3. Thirdly, I want you to see that - **NO ONE HAS THE ABILITY TO SAVE HIMSELF BY HIS OWN WORKS.**

Galatians 2:16 "*Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*"

Lorraine Boettner wrote: "This doctrine of Total Inability, which declares that men are dead in sin, does not mean that all men are equally bad, nor that any man is as bad as he could be, nor that anyone is entirely destitute of virtue, nor that human nature is evil in itself...What it does mean is that since the fall, man rests under the curse of sin, that he is actuated by wrong principles, and that he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation."

Now let me show you why it is impossible for you, or me, or anyone else to be saved by our own works.

- God demands perfection, and we cannot give it.
- We cannot atone for our past sins.
- We cannot change the principles of our heart.
- The very best that we do is marred by sin.

Even in performing our best works, we are motivated and guided by the principles of a sinful heart, so that the very plowing of the wicked is an abomination to God, and our righteousnesses are filthy rags in his sight. Even our holy things are full of evil (Prov. 21:4; Isa. 64:6; Ex. 28:38).

Proverbs 21:4 "An high look, and a proud heart, *and* the plowing of the wicked, *is* sin."

Isaiah 64:6 "But we are all as an unclean *thing*, and all our righteousnesses *are* as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

Exodus 28:38 "And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."

4. Fourthly, I want you to see that, according to the plain statements of Holy Scripture, **NO ONE HAS THE WILL, DESIRE OR THE ABILITY TO COME TO CHRIST BY FAITH (John 5:40; 6:44).**

John 5:40 "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

John 6:44 "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

This is the real issue at hand. Modern day religion, for the most part, professes to believe in original sin and total depravity. Very few people openly teach that man can save himself by his own works. **Yet most people do teach that man by nature does have the ability to come to Christ and be saved, that he has the ability in himself, by his own free-will, to believe on Christ.**

By such teachings, they men make salvation to rest ultimately upon man's free-will. According to the commonly received heresy, man's free-will makes the blood of Christ effectual, man's free will controls the operations of God, and man's free-will determines who shall populate heaven.

The Scriptures declare that man is not only morally depraved and sinful, but that he is also spiritually impotent, unwilling and incapable of coming to Christ by faith. Listen to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ again. He says, "*Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life*" (John 5:40). "*No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him*" (John 6:44). And if the Father draws a man, that man will come to Christ; and he says, "*I will raise him up at the last day.*"

In the Scriptures the idea of "Coming to Christ," simply means believing on him. **Spurgeon said**, "It is used to express those acts of the soul wherein, leaving at once our self-righteousness and our sins, we fly unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and receive his righteousness to be our covering and his blood to be our atonement."

Today we are told that coming to Christ is the easiest thing in all the world. But here our Lord himself tells us that - It is utterly and entirely impossible for any man to come to Christ, unless the Father draws him by effectual and irresistible grace. Man by nature is spiritually impotent, and helpless, utterly without strength. Indeed, man is altogether dead spiritually!

- Man's inability does not lie in any physical defect.
- Man's inability is not a lack of mental power.

I am just as capable of believing on Christ mentally as I am of believing in Abraham Lincoln. The mind is just as capable of seeing the moral guilt of sin as it is of seeing the moral guilt of murder.

- Man's inability lies deep within his nature.

Illustration: A wolf cannot be domesticated and tamed into a trusted pet. A loving mother cannot stab her nursing baby to death. She has no ability to do so, because it is contrary to her nature.

- **No man can ever come to Christ of his own accord, because of the obstinacy of the human will.**

The Arminian cries, "Any man can be saved who will." That is certainly true. 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? And our Lord answers that question with an emphatic, No!

The human will is so desperately set on evil, so thoroughly depraved, so inclined toward evil, and so disinclined toward good, that without the powerful, supernatural, irresistible grace and call of God the Holy Spirit, no human being will ever come to Christ by faith.

- **No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his understanding is darkened (John 3:3).**

John 3:3 "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- He cannot see the exceeding evil of his own heart.
- He cannot see the strict justice of God's law.
- He cannot see the glory of electing grace.
- He cannot see the glory of our Lord's incarnation.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's obedience unto righteousness.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's substitutionary redemption.
- He cannot see the glory of Christ's intercession.

- **No man will ever, of his own accord, come to Christ, because his affections are corrupt.**

We love what we ought to hate. And we hate what we ought to love. *"Men love darkness rather than light."*

- **No man will ever come to Christ of his own voluntary accord, without the power of God, because his conscience is depraved.**

Conscience may tell me that such and such a thing is wrong. But how wrong it is conscience does not know. The unenlightened conscience of man will never tell him that...

- He deserves eternal damnation.
- He must abhor himself.
- He must have a perfect righteousness.
- He must have a perfect atonement.
- **It is true that men will not, and it is true that man cannot, by their own power, come to Christ - "No man can."**

As I said a moment ago, man by nature is dead, spiritually dead. Certainly, if words mean anything, that means that man is without any spiritual power or ability whatsoever.

NOTE: If it is true that the Holy Spirit only gives me a choice or a will to come to Christ, and that the power to come is mine, then certainly I would have a right to share in the glory of my salvation.

NOTE: Because man is guilty of sin, and because he sinfully refuses to believe on Christ, he remains under the wrath of God, and eternal damnation will be his just reward.

But I cannot leave you with such a sad and gloomy picture. It is a terribly black scene that I have set before you...

- Man by nature is fallen.
- Our hearts are evil.
- Our works are evil.
- We are spiritually impotent.
- And we are justly condemned.

But there is a bright ray of hope for such creatures as we are.

5. Finally: THE ONLY HOPE FOR FALLEN, GUILTY, DEPRAVED, HELPLESS, AND VILE SINNERS, SUCH AS WE ARE, IS THE FREE AND SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST (Rom. 9:15-16)

If salvation depends in any measure upon you or me, all hope is gone. But since it is entirely the work of God's free and sovereign grace in Christ, there is hope even for us! He says, "*I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy*" (Rom. 9:15-16).

This is what God does for sinners by his sovereign, eternal grace.

- **He chose to save a great multitude from Adam's fallen race.**
- **He determined to save his elect people by the sacrifice of his Son.**
- **He sent his Son into the world to accomplish eternal redemption for us.**
- **He sends his Spirit to regenerate his chosen people and effectually call them to Christ in faith.**
- **He gives life to the dead.**
- **He convicts of sin.**
- **He reveals Christ.**
- **He causes the awakened sinner, by the power of his irresistible grace to come to Christ,**

Other Verses for Reference:

Genesis 6:5 "And 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.*"

Job 15:16 "How much more abominable and filthy *is* man, which drinketh iniquity like water?"

Psalms 51:5 "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Psalms 58:3 "The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

Isaiah 1:4-6 "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. (5) Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. (6) From the sole of the foot even unto the head *there is* no soundness in it; *but* wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

Isaiah 53:6 "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

Jeremiah 13:23 "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? *then* may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil."

Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Matthew 15:19-20 "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: (20) These are *the things* which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man."

Romans 3:9-12 "What then? are we better *than they*? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; (10) As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: (11) There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

Romans 5:12 "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"

Romans 8:2-8 "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ⁵ For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶ For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, ⁷ because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able *to do so*; ⁸ and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (NASB)
(Discuss illustration of a slave in bondage and his ability to secure his freedom.)

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But 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."

Ephesians 2:1-3 "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins: (2) Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: (3) Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

(Discuss illustration of a dead man from a terminal disease, and his ability to receive the cure for the disease.)

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."