

Total Depravity

1. What is Total Depravity?

- It refers to the Spiritual state of man.
- It refers to the sin and corruption passed down from Adam.
- That we sin not because of our environment or our problems, but sin resides inside us.

2. Why should we study it?

- **To realize God's holiness and our depravity-** The Bible often shows us people who come to the Lord knowing their reality.
- **Isaiah 6:5-** *"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty."*
- *It is not a pleasant doctrine. It is often rejected by many Christians.*
- **Luke 5:8-** *When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.*
- **Luke 18:9–14-** **Here the Bible shows us a clear comparison between a man who comes to God based on their merits and a man who comes knowing that he has nothing to offer.**
 - *To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*
 - ¹³ *"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*
 - ¹⁴ *"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."*
- if you are a Christian, you desire that, we all want to be humble in our prayers and we all desire having the highest view of God and the lowest view of yourself. We want to approach God knowing His Holiness and the Mercy, He has shown us.
- "For if an accused won't know the grievousness of his crimes, how can he appreciate the mercy that the judge has shown him?"

3. This doctrine is hated by the world.

Reasons:

- i. **It presents a low view of man-** it is human nature that wants to achieve something on its own. To look back and say "I did it my way". But when the Lord say that "without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), it takes away our self-worth.
- ii. **It goes against our everyday experiences-** we all know unbelievers who do good deeds. Who society would categorize as good people. They are hardworking people, who don't have a criminal record, who look after their families and even often volunteer at homeless shelters. How can we say that these people are deprived and incapable of any truly good deed?
- iii. **It requires a radical solution-** It requires emptying oneself of any form of pride and accept the fact that the only way to be saved is to submit to the Lord. To realize that we have nothing to offer to God, nothing that will be considered an offering worthy of the King. All we can offer is a broken and contrite heart.

4. Misunderstandings regarding the doctrine-

- i. **It does not mean that unsaved people always act as badly as possible.**
- ii. **It does not mean that human race is deprived of value. Depravity refers to spiritual depravity not depravity of value.**

In fact, one of the reasons why sin is considered offensive to God is because He created us in His image, and He values human life.

Where science tells us that existence of humanity is due to an accident, Christianity states that we are created with a purpose, the purpose of reflecting God's nature.

- iii. **It does not mean that humanity cannot do, what would seem like, acts of goodness.**

When Christ examines an act, He considers both external acts and internal motive.

If a man refrains from cheating or stealing, does it mean that he is doing good?

According to the Scripture, true good deed only occurs the motive behind such deed is to glorify God.

5. Its Impact

- In Romans 3:9–18, Paul talks about the extent of man's depravity,

Verse 9 "What shall we conclude..... power of sin"

- Here Paul makes an absolute statement here. He states that everybody is under sin.
- In Ch.1 he stated that Gentiles were under sin.
- In Ch. 2 he states Jews are under sin.
- His question? Do we have any advantage?
- Immediately answers NO!

'Already Charged'- a *legal term*- to designate a person's punishment as per the charged offense.

'Under Sin'- suggests a metaphor of being crushed under a heavy weight.

Greek term *HUPO*, meant not just to be beneath something, but to be totally under the power, authority, and control of something.

Conclusion according to Paul- Both Gentiles and Jews are under complete subservient and bondage to the dominion of sin.

Jews though that they were the chosen race. So much so that if a Jew was born poor or disabled, they thought that it's a result of a heinous sin conde by him or his parents (John 9:2). This statement was extremely offensive to them.

To support his conclusion, he takes the support of Old Testament and brings **3 categories of accusations:**

- i. (vv. 10–12) Accusation regarding character.
- ii. (vv. 13–14) Accusation regarding conversation.
- iii. (vv. 15–17) Accusation regarding conduct.

I. **Accusation regarding Character**

"There is no one righteous..... not even one" (vv. 10–12)

- Showing the **universality** of total deprivation.
- One of the most radical and extensive accusation.
- **No one rightly be called Righteous.**

- **No one understands...** understands what?
Understands what the righteousness of God involves. (Based on the context)
- These accusations flow sequentially out of each other.
- i.e., no one is righteous, therefore no one understands,
- And, no one understands, therefore no one is righteous.

The logical consequence of these statements: **“no one who seeks God”**.

Q) Do unbelievers seek God?

- Jesus commands in Matt. 6:33 “seek first the kingdom of God.”

Matt 7:7 “Seek and you will find.”

- In the aforementioned verse, Jesus is talking to those who have already believed.
- Unbelievers are incapable of seeking God.

13th Century Theologian Thomas Aquinas

“When we see people searching for good things such as truth, peace of mind, eternal happiness, in fact they are searching for relief from their guilt.”

- We Christians know that only God can give these things, therefore when we see unbelievers searching for these things, we automatically jump to the conclusion that they are searching for God.
- In fact, they are benefits from God, without His involvement.

V. 12- KJV translates it as we have all gone out of **the way**.

Early Christians were referred to as followers of the way. (Acts 9:6; 16:17)

- **John MacArthur**

“We are naturally wayward. The person who is naturally evil, naturally ignorant of God’s truth and naturally rebellious against God. He will naturally live apart from God’s will.”

Turned Aside- *ekklino*- Military term refers to a soldier running away in the wrong direction. In the midst of a war.

II. Accusation regarding Conversation.

“Their Throat..... Bitterness.”

- The body that God gave to glory Him, they have used for sinful purposes.
- similar to Matt. 23:27. Jesus calling the Pharisee’s whitewashed graves.
- Outside they give a picture of tranquility and purity but inside there is a decaying corpse.
- **Open grave-** referring to throat as a passage/ tunnel to the heart.
- Spreads the stench of decay and spreads diseases. (They are spiritually dead)
- Fracturing the truth is the character of a fallen man and sets apart from God who speaks no lie.
- **James 3:5** “Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark.”
- **“Keep Deceiving”-** refers to a fisherman who lures a fish with a small piece of food to make it his meal.- luring others to die with them.

V 13b the poison of vipers is on their lips

- Quoting **Psalm 140:3**.
- **Matt 3:7, 12:34-** Jesus and John the Baptist both refer to false religious leaders as brood of vipers, referring to the fatal damage their words can do.

- Unconverted men, especially when they claim to speak on the behalf of God, can cause catastrophes.

- Paul paints a picture of a man whose – tongue is full of lies, lips are poisonous, and mouth filled with cursing and bitterness!

III. Accusation on Conduct.

(vv.15–17) “Their Feet..... not know.”

He is a violent person. So much so that he enjoys inflicting pain and even take pleasure from the sight of it.

Gen 6:13- God destroyed Earth because it was filled with violence.

v.16 ruin and misery mark their ways.

The logical consequence of seeking violence.

v.17 way of peace they do not know

- peace is the pursuit of a godly man.

- Jews say “Shalom” instead of hello.

v. 18 “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

- **Quoting Psalm 36:1.**
- Paul here states the root cause of all the aforementioned accusations. Their evil character, evil communication and evil conduct all stems from the fact that they are blind towards the fear of God.
- **By reading v.17 and v.18, we can conclude that the reason why the unregenerated man lacks peace is because he has no fear of God.**
- **(Prov 9:10)**- it is the beginning of wisdom.
- **(Acts 10)**- about Cornelius and his family, they were God fearing, therefore God gave generously to them.
- *For a believer the fear of God is a Reverential fear* – the awareness of His attributes, His power, His Holiness, His glory, and His Mercy.

6. Conclusion

That’s the reason the doctrine of Total Depravity is so essential to Christianity.

- It shows us how we were chosen by the Father.
- It was not us that sought Him and decided to have faith in Him.
- We are not kept in faith because we are good enough to persevere.
- It is all Him.
- **Romans 5:8** “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- Deut. 7:7- The Lord did not chose Israel because they were the biggest nation, in fact they were the “fewest of all people”.
- He chose them because He willed it.
- That’s why He chose us, because He willed it, that’s why He will bring us to heaven, because He willed it.
- Doctrine of Total Depravity shows us how merciful our Father has been to us, and gives us the correct description of our part in our salvation.