

## Total Depravity

### 1. Terminology

A better phrase may be *radical corruption* (from Latin *radix* meaning root). At the root of who we are as fallen creatures, we are thoroughly corrupt.

### 2. The issue

Are we so tainted by sin so as to have no inclination towards God whatsoever, or are we left with some vestige of desiring God within? Are we sick or dead? Are we capable of making ourselves seek God or are we hopelessly lost without sovereign, divine intervention.

### 3. Definition

Total depravity means:

- a. Sin has corrupted all of man's constitution: will, mind, body, emotions, heart.
- b. Nothing in us prompts us to move toward God; in fact we are running from Him.
- c. Nothing in us prompts God to pity us and to move toward us.
- d. Despite tragically fallen, by common grace we are not as bad as we could be. People do accomplish "good" things by common grace. The one time God seems to have given over His creatures to the full extent of their sin was just prior to the flood: "*And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*" (Gen.6:5)

### 4. Implications

If man is dead, he has no hope of salvation apart from God's sovereign initiative. Either He elects us or, if we have some ability to move toward God, we elect Him. Once we establish total depravity, each of the other four points of Calvinism necessarily follow.

### 5. Is man pictured in the Bible as merely sick, or spiritually dead?

Eph.2:1 And you were dead in your sins

Deut. 29:4 Yet to this day God has not given you a heart to know...

John 5:21,24

1 Tim.5:6

1 John 3:14

We have no appetite for God: Romans 3:10-18; Matt.11:27

We are at enmity with God: Rom.5:5-8; John 5:18; Prov.19:3; 14:2

We are darkened in our understanding Eph.4:17f; John 3:19

We have no spiritual understanding 1 Cor.2:14

God calls us a new creation (2 Cor.5:17) because we have no power in ourselves to produce it.

Our hearts are as stone before God, completely unresponsive (Ez.11:19)

We are enslaved to sin, Satan, and the world Jn.8:34; Eph.2:1-3;

We are estranged from the womb Ps.58:3; 51:5; Is.48:8

6. What about the will?

<u>Garden</u>	<u>After Fall</u>	<u>Born Again</u>	<u>Heaven</u>
Able to sin/ Able not to sin	not able not to sin	able to sin/ able not to sin	not able to sin

Man is a free moral agent, in that he determines his own actions, is conscious of moral obligation, is not coerced to sin, chooses out of his nature, and as such is totally responsible for his actions before God.

He has **liberty** to choose righteousness or sin (God is keeping him from it).  
But he has no **ability** to choose because the desire is absent.

Is the will, therefore, sovereign or servant? Is it self-determining or determined by something else? Whenever we choose something, we always choose what we desire, because every choice depends on a preference for one thing over another (ie. the strongest motive acting upon it at the time). We make free choices, but only choose what we want. Since we are dead in sin we will never want God until he creates the desire within us.

7. This does not mean we do not know God.

We most certainly do! But the tragedy is we want nothing to do with him. Romans 1 explains the dynamic:

We know the nature of God through nature (the creation) 1:20

We suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness 1:18

We refuse to thank or honor God and speculate about other gods 1:21

Being irrepressibly religious, we exchange God's glory for another glory 1:23-25

We basically resent the fact that we owe God everything and we'll be condemned for not giving it to Him, so we create gods after our own liking. We have a strong aversion to the true God. Yet, the nature of sin is to deny the fact that we are suppressing the truth about God.