

Total Depravity

I. Defined

Total depravity is a general term describing the effects of sin in the sinner's life. It is sometimes called absolute total inability and refers to man's unwillingness and inability to deal with his sin and secure salvation on his own. The term denotes inherited sinfulness (without any original righteousness), resulting in a evil bent toward sin and an inability to deal with this sin and secure salvation on his own. Every man, woman and child born into this world is enslaved to the service of sin and apart from the efficacious grace of God, is utterly unable to choose and follow God and accept His plan of redemption.

Westminster Confession: "Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto."

The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) – Backside

II. What It Does Not Mean (Louis Berkof)

1. That every man is as thoroughly depraved as he can possibly become.
2. That the sinner is without an innate knowledge of the will of God or a conscience that discriminates between good and evil.
3. That sinful man does not often admire virtuous character and actions in others, or is incapable of disinterested affections and actions in his relations with his fellow man.
4. That every unregenerate man will indulge in every form of sin.

III. Biblical Texts

Genesis 3:1-25; 6:5; 8:21; Ecclesiastes 9:3; Isaiah 64:6; Jeremiah 13:23; 17:9; John 1:12-13; 3:3-5, 8; 5:21; 5:39-42; 6:44; 8:34, 36; 15:4-5; Romans 1:18-22; 3:10-23; 5:12-19; 7:18, 23, 24; 8:7-8; 14:23; Mark 7:21-23; I Corinthians 1:18; 2:14; 12:3; 15:21-22; II Corinthians 3:5; 4:4; Ephesians 2:1-3, 8-10; 4:17-19; 5:8; Philippians 1:29; Colossians 2:13; II Timothy 2:25; 3:2-5; Titus 1:15; Hebrews 11:6.

IV. Man's Depravity is total in at least five senses

1. It is total because the entire human race is _____ by it.
2. It is total because it extends to every part of man's _____.
3. It is total because _____ man does in his sinful condition is sin.
4. It is total because we are _____ capable of every sin that we have seen our neighbor commit (Augustine).
5. It is total because of man's inability to _____ to God and do good.

V. Implications

1. A sinner is totally helpless to save himself for he is dead to spiritual things.
2. Only God can bring deliverance from sin, death, and judgment.
3. Theology is more important than methodology indicating that many of our churches today are preaching a false gospel and further deceiving mankind.

4. Regarding evangelism – never give up on anyone. You keep sharing the truths of God's Word and keep praying that God will open their eyes from their blindness.
5. One of the reasons evangelism is so difficult is that the fallen sinner hates God and loves himself. He wants a god who will give him what he wants. To him, it really is about himself.
6. Concerning missions: We do not change the truth for different cultures. God's w=Word is sufficient and it is not up to us as to how they will receive it. Just share God's Word and allow the Holy Spirit of God to do His work.
7. It should cause us to be humble and meek, recognizing what Christ has done for us. I Peter 1:3 states that we are begotten again unto a living hope by the Word of truth. We have nothing to boast about, as to what we have done.
8. The doctrine of Total Depravity can be very divisive in churches where it is misunderstood. We must not be ignorant of God's Holy Word.

The London Baptist Confession of Faith (1689) - In Chapter 6, entitled '*Of the Fall of Man, of Sin, and of the Punishment Thereof*', we read,

"Although God created man upright and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof (Gen. 2v16-17), yet he did not long abide in this honor; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to subdue Eve, then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did willfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given to them, in eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3v12-13; 2 Cor. 11v3), which God was pleased, according to His wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it to His own glory. Our first parents, by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them whereby death came upon all (Rom. 3v23): all becoming dead in sin (Rom. 5v12), and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. (Tit. 1v15; Gen. 6v5; Jer. 17v9; Rom. 3v10-19) They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind, the guilt of the sin was imputed, and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation (Rom. 5v12-19; 1 Cor. 15v21-22, 45, 49), being now conceived in sin (Ps. 51v5; Job 14v4), and by nature children of wrath (Ep. 2v3), the servants of sin, the subjects of death (Rom. 5v12, 6v20), and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free. (Heb. 2v14-15; 1 Thess. 1v10) From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil (Rom. 8v7; Col. 1v21), do proceed all actual transgressions. (Js. 1:14-15; Mt. 15v19) The corruption of nature, during this life, does remain in those that are regenerated (Rom. 7v18, 23; Eccles. 7v20; 1 John 1v8); and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and the first motions thereof, are truly and properly sin. (Rom. 7v23-25; Gal. 5v17)" [8]