

I. Total Depravity Defined

- A. Traditionally known as “Total Depravity” (the ‘T’ in TULIP), Also known as: **total inability, radical inability, radical corruption.**
- B. Definition- “Since the Fall, humans are enslaved to sin and by nature bent toward evil in every part.”
 1. **Consequence of the fall. Explanation for this doctrine is the historical event in the life of historical Adam. Not a design flaw or evolutionary development.**
 2. **Applies to all human beings. All descended from Adam (1 exception).**
 3. **Means we are captives or slaves to sin. Not just tainted or have a tendency but completely enslaved. Thus the governing principle in the life of a fallen human is rebellion against God.**
 4. **Concerns the very nature of fallen human beings. Not just incidental, or doesn’t have to be, or could change.**
 5. **Whenever a fallen human being is faced with a choice between god and evil they will inevitably choose evil.**
 6. **The whole of human nature is affected. Intellect, will, affections, emotions. Total means whole or in every part not utter as in as evil as we could be.**
- C. Some implications of Radical Depravity:
 1. Human beings are not “basically good”!
 2. We are not sinners because we sin; rather, we sin because we are sinners.
 3. Fallen, unregenerate people are by nature inclined toward sin, unbelief, and denial.
 4. Fallen, unregenerate people will never freely choose to embrace Jesus Christ as Savior.
 5. No fallen person can be saved without initial divine grace (i.e., grace is necessary).
 6. Divine grace precedes the human response to the gospel (faith and repentance).
 - a. This divine grace is not merely external to us (e.g., the objective work of Christ).

- b. This divine grace must also bring about substantial internal changes in us.

D. Some misunderstandings of Total Depravity:

1. “Fallen, unregenerate people have no good in them and never do any good things.” Total Depravity doesn’t mean that every person is as bad as they could be. The would total in extensive, depravity extends to every aspect of the person, not intensive that they are utter devils. However, this would be the case if it were not for the grace of God. What we actually see is a combination of total depravity along with common grace and special grace. Common grace is given to all people and one of it’s purposes is to restrain sin and evil. Special grace is that grace given to believers that frees them from bondage, saves them, sanctifies them and ultimately glorifies them.
2. “Fallen, unregenerate people have no knowledge or understanding of God.”Romans 1- there is enough knowledge that they are without excuse, they suppress it in sin. No fallen person can have a saving knowledge of God.
3. “Fallen, unregenerate people have no spiritual interest in God or Jesus.”
Apart from divine grace this would be true

II. Total Depravity Demonstrated

A. Exegetical basis:

1. Genesis 6:5
2. John 6:44 There is a total inability on the part of man apart from divine grace to come to God. Not only cannot but would not come.
3. Romans 8:7-8 Those in the natural fallen state cannot please God. Would repenting of sin and trusting Christ be pleasing to God? Of course. But those set on the flesh cannot please God so they cannot apart from divine grace repent and trust in Christ.

4. 1 Corinthians 2:14-16- Can the natural person accept or understand the gospel, no it is spiritual.
5. Ephesians 2:1-10- spiritually dead on our own. Can spiritually dead people do spiritual deeds, no, we must be made spiritually alive. Therefore salvation is by grace alone.

B. Theological basis:

1. Salvation is by grace alone (Sola Gratia).
2. Therefore, we must be unable to contribute to our salvation by our own efforts. IF it is possible for fallen humanity to contribute anything to their salvation they don't need to be saved by grace alone (Eph2:4-5)
3. Therefore, we must be totally depraved (as defined above). If you deny total depravity then in order to be consistent you ought to also deny sola gratia.

III. Discussion Questions

- A. Why do so many people (including many professing Christians) believe that human beings are “basically good”? We have too low a view of sin. We consider it according to human standards in comparison with others rather than in comparison to the pure unadulterated holiness of God. We are naturally inclined to think more highly of ourselves than we are. Sociological studies have showed most people consider themselves to be above average. This of course is mathematically impossible.

IV. Total Depravity Defended

- A. Objection 1: “Wasn't Gandhi a good man even though he wasn't a Christian?” If not Gandhi, then your neighbor, friend, etc. We've all see non-Christians who are good workers, citizens, love their spouse and children involved in humanitarian works. We aren't denying that non-Christians do commendable things. Man looks on the outside while God looks at the heart. God isn't mainly interested in an external conformity to his moral law. This is the error of the Pharisees. God is primarily interested in the state of the heart from which these things flow. At the core if not done to the end of the glory of God

in thanksgiving to God in faith they are denying God and therefore cannot commend them to God. WCF 16.7 addresses the issue.

- B. Objection 2: “If unbelievers can’t respond to the gospel, there’s no point preaching it.” Would be true if it weren’t for grace. Preaching is necessary for conversion but it isn’t sufficient. Romans 10- how will they believe unless someone tells them.
- C. Objection 3: “If we aren’t able to do any good, God can’t hold us responsible for our sins.” The idea of not being responsible could be argued if we were coerced, forced against our will to act in the way we do. But this is not the case we do what we want to do. Its not a physical or mental inability to do what is good. Its not so much that we can’t but we won’t. We will not obey because we will not to obey.

V. Radical Depravity and the Christian Life

- A. TD explains why the world is in such a mess and why people commit moral atrocities. Gk Chesterton- Responds to pole on what’s wrong with the world. Dear sirs, I am . Sincerely GK
- B. TD exalts God’s free grace and mercy. If we are radically depraved then our only hope is God’s free grace and mercy.
- C. TD reminds us what we would be were it not for God’s grace and mercy in our lives. If this is true, then what distinguishes me from Hitler is God’s grace. Not hyperbole, sober theological truth.
- D. TD keeps us humble and reliant on God’s continued grace and mercy.
- E. TD guards against self-righteousness and boastful comparisons with others. Whatever I happen to be today is a combination of TD and divine grace and I only contributed the depravity.
- F. TD reminds us that education and technology, politics are not the solution to the world’s problems. None of these things as good as they may be at times can solve the problem of total depravity, in fact they are products of the depraved societies they come from.
- G. TD keeps us from being discouraged when our preaching and evangelism aren’t ‘successful’. The best preaching and evangelism in the world isn’t

sufficient to convert anyone. Only supernatural divine grace can turn hearts of stone to hearts of flesh to bring spiritual life from spiritual death. Just be sure we don't use this as an excuse to do these things poorly.

- H. TD keeps us from being discouraged when our parenting doesn't produce 'good' children. Of course we should be good parenting and parenting according to the Scriptures but even the best parents in history cannot produce good children out of depraved children. If your children are rebellious monsters that may be in part your fault, but it may not.
- I. TD encourages us that the new creation must be no less good than this world is bad! This can all be rather depressing. The idea is that the world is a mess and that can get us down. The reason it's a mess is that people are radically depraved. If this is the result of a world full of people who are totally depraved, imagine the world that will result when people are radically glorified. When the world is full of people whose hearts are perfectly and permanently bent toward the glorification of God and the enjoyment of God. As bad as this seems to us the greater our hope should be in the world to come. As bad as this looks it is not as bad as it could be because it is tempered by divine grace, but the next world won't be tempered by human sin. While this world isn't as bad as it can be the next will be as good as it can be.