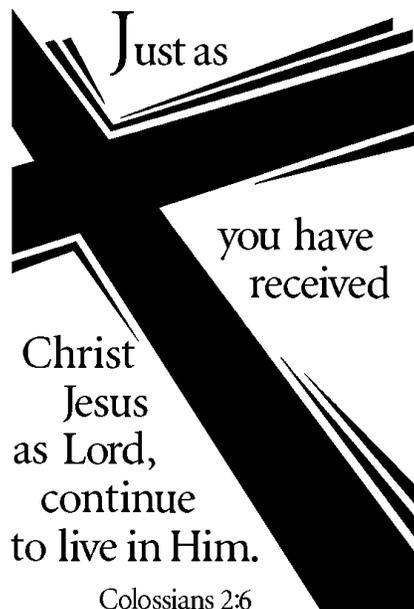


For HIS Glory
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PRAY FOR EMMETT & ANN.

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In this little issue, and, Lord willing, every issue, our only purpose is to honor *Jesus Christ*.

The Doctrines of Grace ~ 3

Their First Point—Total Depravity

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I. Total Depravity Defined. *Depravity* is “the quality or state marked by debasement, corruption, perversion, or deterioration.” To be *totally* depraved is to be depraved in the entirety of one’s being, and in every sphere of his life.

Total depravity must be distinguished from *absolute* depravity. To be *totally* depraved is to be as *extensively* depraved as possible in thoughts, words, and deeds. But to be *absolutely* depraved is to be as *intensely* depraved as possible; to be as evil as is possible, as is the devil. Man is *totally* depraved, but he is not *absolutely* depraved. For example, totally depraved man is capable of human or relative good. Jesus Christ declared that even reprobate sinners are capable of loving others, and doing good to them (Luke 6:33). (See also the examples of Jehu in 2 Kings 10:29-31 and of Gentiles in Romans 2:14). But even in performing human or relative good, he has not done truly good in the sight of God. This is true because his motive for doing so is wrong. His good deeds are for love of self, instead of God—to exalt his pride, instead of God—and all apart from faith in Christ. Therefore, even the human or relative good done by men is depraved.

II. Total Depravity Contrasted. Total Depravity is denied by those who believe salvation is in some way, or to some degree attributable to the works of man rather than to the grace of God, alone. For example, according to Arminianism, mankind is influenced by sin, but not under its dominion, as all yet have free will, and the ability to exercise it. Anyone can, of his own free will, come to Christ for salvation. All men have faith, but not all will to exercise it.

III. Total Depravity Proven.

1. Total depravity is the state of the entire human race (Eccl. 7:20)—“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin” (cp. parenthetical phrase in 2 Chronicles 6:36). But this was not the original state of man (Eccl. 7:29)—“God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes.” The first man, Adam, was made righteous, holy, and “in the image of God,” and “good” (Gen. 1:26f, 31). But he transgressed the law of God, and consequently died spiritually (Gen. 2:16f; 3:1-8), meaning that he was separated from God. The consequence of his fall has passed on through imputation to all his posterity (Rom. 5:12ff)—“Therefore, just as through one man, sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned...by the one man’s offense many died (v.15)...through one man’s offense judgment came to all men,

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TOTAL DEPRAVITY

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resulting in condemnation (v.18)...by one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (v.19). "[Both Jews and Greeks...are all under sin. As it is written, 'There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one'" (Rom. 3:9-12). "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way" (Isa. 53:6). "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6).

2. Total depravity is the state of each man in all his outward or physical features (Isa. 1:6)—"From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores; they have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment." "The whole head is sick" (Isa. 1:5). "Their throat is an open tomb; with their tongues they have practiced deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips; whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood" (Rom. 3:13-15).

3. Total depravity is the state of each man in all his inward or spiritual faculties (Titus 1:5)—"Even their mind and conscience are defiled." "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). "[T]he imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). "Truly the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil; madness is in their hearts while they live" (Eccl. 9:3). "And the whole heart faints" (Isa. 1:5). "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jer. 17:9). "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man" (Mark 7:21-23). "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:7f). Natural men walk "in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:17-19).

4. Total depravity is the state of each man throughout the entirety of his life (Psa. 51:5; 58:3)—"Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies."

5. Total depravity includes also total inability. The former term suggests the *positive characteristic* of man's evil, while the latter term suggests the *negative lack* in man for good. The total inability of man in his native state is evidenced in various ways:

i. Man is incapable of spiritual good because he is "dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, 5; Col. 2:13).

ii. Man is incapable of spiritual good because he cannot understand the good (1 Cor. 2:14). "But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him [see 1:18]; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

iii. Man is incapable of spiritual good because he cannot desire the good (as in John 3:19f)—Jesus said "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

iv. Man is incapable of spiritual good because he cannot perform the good (as in John 15:4f): Jesus said "... without Me you can do nothing."

v. Man is incapable of spiritual good because "the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one" (1 John 5:19). They are "children of the devil" (1 John 3:10) and in "the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Tim. 2:26). "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do" (John 8:44). They consequently walk "according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind" (Eph. 2:1f). And they are "slaves of sin" (Rom. 6:20)—"foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another" (Titus 3:3).

vi. Man is incapable of remedying his situation (Prov. 20:9): "Who can say, 'I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin'?" "What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous? If God puts no trust in His saints, and the heavens are not pure in His sight, how much less, man, who is abominable and filthy, who drinks iniquity like water!" (Job 15:14-16). "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? No one!" (Job 14:4). "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard its spots? Then may you also do good who are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23). "[A] bad tree bears bad fruit...nor can a bad tree bear good fruit" (Matt. 7:17f).

Therefore, no one of his own volition is willing to come to Christ for salvation (John 5:40). No one is, therefore, *able* to come to Christ for salvation apart from the Father graciously drawing him (6:44), and granting to him the wherewithal to do so (6:65). Thankfully, the Father has given His chosen people to Christ, and every one of them will come to Him for salvation—and none of them will ever lose his salvation (5:37, 45). Only God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ can conquer man's total depravity.