

1998 Summer Lecture Series (Carson City)
An Introduction to the Reformed Faith (#7)
Grace Needed: Total Depravity
July 27, 1998

What you believe about sin will govern what you think about salvation. What you understand about depravity will shape your understanding of grace. One of the reasons our views of salvation and grace are so anemic today, is because our views of sin and depravity are so microscopic.

Tonight we get to the "T" in TULIP, and we will unfold the historical and theological importance of this doctrine, from three periods of church history. We will to a small degree revisit the first lecture, "A Tale of Two Gospels." And then we will expound the doctrine of Total Depravity from the Scriptures.

I. The Historical and Theological Importance of Total Depravity

- A. The Early Church: Pelagius begins with a denial of original sin and total depravity.
#4, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13
This in turn radically affects his understanding of grace >> #14-18

*A semi-pelagianism wins the day at the Council of Orange and marks the church for the next 1,000 years. This semi-pelagianism acknowledges original sin, but affirms that it is not so pervasive so as to cripple the will.
- B. The Reformation: When we think of the Reformation, we think of the 95 Theses, the Diet at Worms, but Luther himself identifies what he believes is the core issue in his debate with Erasmus over the Bondage of the Will (the nature of man in his sin and the subsequent view of the nature of grace is the central issue)
BW, 113, 116-117
- C. Modern Times: Although our early colonies were marked by a Calvinistic Puritanism, and although Jonathan Edwards emphasized the man's total depravity, strangely enough, it was many of Edwards followers who began to depart from his orthodoxy and gave the church New England Theology. One of the direct benefactors was Charles Finney, who undermines salvation by grace with his denial of original sin and total depravity.
ST, 249, 307
- D. Where does this leave us today? We give lip service to Total Depravity because of its dominant presence in the Bible, but we

hang on to every vestige of pelagianism that we can. We ignore original sin which puts us in a condition, and instead focus on the acts of sin. We simply don't believe in the pervasiveness of sin, and thus insist on a free will. We define sin in man-centered terms and thus strip it of its true horror as an offense against a holy God. Our repudiation of the Law of God has turned sin into a nebulous idea instead of concrete, damning offenses which spring from a polluted heart. We are indeed confused. What does the Bible say?

II. The Biblical Doctrine of Total (or Radical) Depravity Unfolded

A. The Imputation of Adam's Sin

Rom. 5:12

1. Legal imputation
2. The inheritance of a dead spiritual state
Gen. 2:16-17; Rom. 5:12; Eph. 2:1
3. The Inheritance of a corrupt nature
Psa. 51:5; 58:3

B. Pervasive Corruption

1. The mind 1 Cor. 2:14; Rom. 8:7; Eph. 4:17-19
2. The will Jn. 8:34, 44; Rom. 6:20; Titus 3:3
3. The affections Jer. 17:9; Jn. 3:19
Thomas Boston, 127

C. Complete Inability

Jer. 13:23; Jn. 6:44; Rom. 3:10-12

D. Under Divine Condemnation and Hopeless!

in Adam, in nature, by deeds

We will not and cannot do good or seek God. Total depravity spells condemnation and hopelessness. This is why the lesson is called "Grace Needed: Total Depravity." It is only in this light, that we can begin to understand and appreciate Divine grace in election, in the atonement, in effectual calling and in final perseverance.

III. The Relevance of this Doctrine

A. Depravity and conversion

1. We must feel our own depravity if we are to feel our need for a Savior
2. We must be deeply aware of our own depravity if we are to glorify grace
Spurgeon, 52, 54

- B. Depravity and holiness
 - 1. We must be painfully aware of our own depravity if we are to progress in holiness.
 - 2. We must be painfully aware of our own depravity if we are to have a vibrant faith
- C. Depravity and others
 - 1. We must be thoroughly acquainted with total depravity if we are to be good witnesses of the gospel.
 - 2. We must be thoroughly acquainted with total depravity if we are to be good spouses and parents.