

The Face of Depravity

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. ([Joh 1:4-5](#))"

Critics of the doctrine of human depravity (total depravity) occasionally ridicule the doctrine because the word "depravity" does not appear in the Bible. Many of these same people believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, even though that word also does not appear in the Bible. Why? They believe in it because the doctrine clearly appears in Scripture. I believe in the doctrine of human depravity for the same reason; the doctrine clearly appears in Scripture. It is telling that the word "depravity" appears in the definition of no less than nine Greek words that are used in the New Testament. These words are translated in the King James translation by such English words as malignity, curse, speak evil of, corrupt, utterly perish, vanity, inordinate affection, lust, wickedness, iniquity, carnal, fleshly, and defiled. Given this rather wide array of English words, can we reasonably doubt the idea of depravity as set forth in the New Testament?

Listed below are just a few passages where one of these words appears.

1. *Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, **malignity**; whisperers.... ([Ro 1:29](#))* There is an inherent "malignity" in these people to the moral rightness of God's Law.
2. *For the creature was made subject to **vanity**, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.... ([Ro 8:20](#))* Man does not come into the world "un-depraved" and make the choice to sin and become depraved. He enters the world with a depraved disposition ([Ps 51:5](#), a passage that refers to David's condition at birth. Some who object to this doctrine attempt to interpret this passage to mean that David believed that he was conceived through a sinful affair between his mother and someone other than her husband, Jesse. However, if that had been the case, according to Mosaic Law, David could not have been Israel's legitimate king.)
3. *Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of **malice** and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. ([1Co 5:8](#))* People who believe in God should not

- attempt to imitate depraved, wicked people or their habits.
4. *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the **vanity** of their mind.... (Eph 4:17)* Again, the child of God has no business imitating the mindset of the wicked. These people walk in depravity; they do not merely respond to divine and arbitrary decrees, the abominable error of fatalistic determinism.
 5. *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against **spiritual wickedness** in high places. (Eph 6:12)* We wrestle against sin and depravity; just as loyal soldiers in battle, we should practice consistent and aggressive opposition to depravity. It is our enemy!
 6. *Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of **corrupt** minds, reprobate concerning the faith." (2Ti 3:8)*
The corruption of depravity pervades the mind and will. Again, notice that man's sinful corruption grows from within man, not from a fatalistic divine decree.
 7. *But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall **utterly perish** in their own corruption.... (2Pe 2:12)* Depravity is a consistent trait of the wicked whom God shall finally sentence to eternal punishment. Admittedly repetitious, but it bears the repetition; it is their own inherent corruption, not a divine decree that caused these people to be depraved.
 8. *But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they **corrupt** themselves.... (Jude 10)* Who caused their corruption; a divine decree or their own sinfulness?

These passages indicate that fallen man both inherits and practices the traits of depravity. It could rightly be said of the wicked regarding their attitude toward God, "*Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways....*" (Job 21:14)

The practice of depravity varies in degree. As indicated in an earlier study, "total depravity" does not mean that fallen man practices the most extreme sinful deeds possible. However, these verses reveal a consistent bent, a disposition toward sin that is as predictable as iron filings drawn to a strong magnet. A depraved person may well do things that we perceive as right, but we cannot know their motive. In a proper sense God is honored when natural (not spiritual, unsaved) people conduct their lives with moral correctness. The theme of these passages leads us to believe that man in this state naturally and of his own will typically prefers sin and the satisfaction of personal appetite to the things that honor God.

Advocates of extreme predestination typically affirm the idea that God

causes everything from the wind's blowing a grain of sand in the Sahara Desert or a single drop of rainfall to the greatest of sinful events such as the Holocaust or other acts of sinful and depraved men. Despite this pervasive view that attributes every event of human history to God's causative decrees, many advocates of this view illogically say that they do not believe that God causes sin.

They can't have it both ways. If God causes everything, He causes sin.

This view falls in the face of multiple Scriptures that reject the idea that God causes sin—or for that matter that He causes every event in human history. Scripture consistently rejects the notion that God is in any way, however remotely or indirectly, causative in the sinful activities of sinful humanity. Elijah witnessed several natural events that Scripture specifically states, "...but the Lord was not in...." ([1Ki 19:11-12](#)) Repeatedly Jeremiah rebuked the abominable error of his countrymen who sinned dreadfully and tried to blame God for their sinful conduct ([Jer 7:8-10](#); 7:31; 19:5; 32:35). New Testament writers equally reject that God is in any way causative in the sinful actions of humanity ([1Co 14:33](#); [Jas 1:13](#); 1 [Joh 2:16-17](#)).

Simply stated, God cannot cause all things and *not* cause sin. Either we believe that He caused all things, sin included, or we reject the errant notion that He caused all things, but in some mystical and inexplicable manner did not cause sin.

The darkness that pervades the mind—indeed the whole being—of fallen sinful humanity is self-inflicted, an act of moral self-mutilation, not the result of a diabolical decree of God's "secret will." In [Ro 3:1-8](#) Paul vehemently rejects the idea that God could in any way cause human sin and then righteously judge and punish man for what He decreed that man do. Rather than embracing such an idea, Paul categorically stated that such an idea constituted a "slandering report" against him, his teaching, and the true gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We live in a culture in which hardened criminals increasingly blame other people in their lives or the culture itself for their crimes. Is it any wonder then that people who reject the clear teaching of Scripture should follow the fallen inclination of our culture and adopt the ultimate "blame game"—blaming God for their sins? Forty years ago Flip Wilson built his career as a comedian largely on the quip, "The devil made me do it." Today our culture, and professing Christians who allow this fallen culture to influence their thinking, gladly shifts blame for their personal sins onto anyone or anything, but they stubbornly refuse to look in the mirror and acknowledge the fundamental reality—human sin begins with sinful humanity, not with God! *At the last Judgment God shall*

turn to every condemned sinner and pass sentence based on sins the sinner committed, not on the mystery of divine decrees.

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