

Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, Lesson #12

I. What is Total Depravity?

- Since the fall, man rests under the curse of sin, that he is made to behave by wrong principles, and he is wholly unable to love God or to do anything meriting salvation.

WCF 6.4 *From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.*

- Unregenerate man is not utterly depraved (not completely as bad as he could be) but he is utterly indisposed to all good.
- Men may appear to do good deeds (give to charity, love their families, help old ladies across the street) but apart from Christ, man can do no truly virtuous deed (before God) because his motives are not to glorify God.

II. Total Depravity and Man's Free Will

A. Defining free will

- Our will is not utterly spontaneous and cannot be completely neutral.
- Instead the will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment. Our choices are determined by our desires.

B. What does this understanding of free will have to do with total depravity?

- Our problem lies with the nature of our desires. If unregenerate man's natural state is that of depravity, then he is naturally "wholly inclined to all evil".
- "...the natural man is free to come to God but not able. How can he repent of his sin when he loves it?" - Boettner
- Fallen man does not naturally possess spiritual discernment. It must be awakened within him through the Holy Spirit.

1 Cor 2:14 But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

C. Depraved man is dead in his trespasses and sins

Eph 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins

Just as a man who's dead physically cannot perform any physical actions, a man who's dead spiritually cannot perform any spiritual actions. Regeneration **MUST** therefore precede faith in "ordo salutis".

III. Total Depravity is Fallen Man's Default Nature

How and when do we become spiritually dead? Is it when we commit our first sin? Is it at a certain age? We are born spiritually dead; born with a sin nature.

WSC 26. Q.How is original sin conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity? **A.** Original sin is conveyed from our first parents unto their posterity by natural generation, so as all that proceed from them in that way are conceived and born in sin.

Psalms 51:5 Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, And in sin my mother conceived me.

Psalms 58:3 The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies.

Job 15:14-16 What is man, that he could be pure? And he who is born of a woman, that he could be righteous?

15 If God puts no trust in His saints, And the heavens are not pure in His sight, 16 How much less man, who is abominable and filthy, Who drinks iniquity like water!

Gen 8:21 ...the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth...

Acts of sin are therefore but the expression of the natural, wicked heart. You're not a sinner because you sin; you sin because you're a sinner!

IV. The Fall of Man

WCF Chapter 6

2. *By this sin they (our first parents) fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.*

3. *They (our first parents) being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.*

Gen 2:16-17; 3:6 And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” ...
6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

...the Bible from beginning to end declares that man is ruined—totally ruined—that he is in a state of guilt and depravity from which he is utterly unable to deliver himself, and that God might in justice have left him to perish.

A. Adam was our federal head, or representative

When Adam disobeyed God and sinned, mankind was brought under the curse of sin also. We are all “fallen” in Adam.

WLC Q. 22. *Did all mankind fall in that first transgression? A. The covenant being made with Adam as a public person, not for himself only, but for his posterity (future generations), all mankind descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him, and fell with him in that first transgression.*

Q. 23. *Into what estate did the fall bring mankind? A. The fall brought mankind into an estate of sin and misery.*

Rom 5:12,18,19 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned... 18 Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. 19 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.

...God, as guardian of the race and for its best interests, gave all its members a trial in the person of Adam under the most favorable circumstances—making him for that end the representative and personal substitute of each one of his natural descendants. He formed with him a covenant of works and of life; i. e., He gave to him for himself, and in behalf of all whom he represented, a promise of eternal life, conditioned upon perfect obedience,—that is, upon works. The obedience demanded was a specific test for a temporary period, which period of trial must necessarily be closed either by the reward consequent upon obedience, or the death consequent upon disobedience. The 'reward' promised was eternal life, which was a grace including far more than was originally bestowed upon Adam at his creation, the grant of which would have elevated the race into a condition of indefeasible holiness and happiness forever. The 'penalty' threatened and executed was death; 'The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.' The nature of the death threatened can be determined only from a consideration of all that was involved in the curse actually inflicted. This we know to have included the instant withdrawal of the divine favor and spiritual intercommunion upon which man's life depended. Hence the alienation and curse of God; the sense of guilt and corruption of nature; consequent actual transgressions, the miseries of life, the dissolution of the body, the pains of hell. - A.A. Hodge

B. Consequences of the fall

Rom 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Primarily spiritual death, or eternal separation from God; but also physical death.

Suffering and death are declared to be the consequence of sin; and the reason that all die is that "all sinned." Now we know that many suffer and die in infancy, before they have committed any sin themselves. It follows that either God is unjust in punishing the innocent, or that those infants are in some way guilty creatures. And if guilty, how have they sinned? It is impossible to explain it on any other supposition than that they sinned in Adam.

The guilt of Adam's public sin is by a judicial act of God immediately charged to the account of each and every one of his descendants from the moment he begins to exist. - A.A. Hodge

C. Despite the ability to choose obedience, Adam willingly chose disobedience.

Adam was not tempted by Satan in a direct way. Eve was tempted by Satan and Eve was deceived. Adam, however, sinned willfully and deliberately.

1 Tim 2:13-14 For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

...in the full consciousness of what he was doing, and with a perfect realization of the solemn consequences which were involved, he deliberately chose to follow his wife in her act of sinful disobedience. It was this deliberate wilfulness of man's sin which constituted its heinous character. Had he been attacked by Satan, and forced to yield through some overwhelming power being brought against him, we might have tried to find some excuse for his fall. But when, with eyes wide open, and with mind perfectly conscious and fully aware of the awful nature of his act, he used his free will to respond to the claims of the creature in defiance of the Creator, no excuse can he found for his fall.

Pre-Fall Man	Post-Fall Man	Reborn Man	Glorified Man
able to sin	able to sin	able to sin	
able to not sin		able to not sin	able to not sin
	unable to not sin		
			unable to sin

- Could Adam obey God? Yes
- Can unregenerate man obey God? No
- Can born-again man obey God? Yes
- Can glorified man disobey God? No

The Scriptures declare that fallen man is a captive, a willing slave to sin, and entirely unable to deliver himself from its bondage and corruption. He is incapable of understanding, and much less of doing, the things of God...And such being the depth of man's corruption it is wholly beyond his own power to cleanse himself. His only hope of an amendment of life lies accordingly in a change of heart, which change is brought about by the sovereign re-creative power of the Holy Spirit who works when and where and how He pleases...Man does not possess the power of self-regeneration, and until this inward change takes place, he cannot be convinced of the truth of the Gospel by any amount of external testimony.

Jer 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?

John 8:34 Jesus answered them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.