

Date: 14.10.2020

Time: 7.30pm

Preacher: Gavino Fioretti

Psalms (read): Psalm 14 (Sing Psalms) and Psalm 51:1-7 (Scottish Psalter)

Reading: Romans 3:1-23

Text: Romans 3:10

Outline: Total Depravity

Biblical evidence for total depravity

Theological implications of total depravity

Causes of total depravity

Implications of total depravity

Total Depravity

• **Introduction**

We've been studying together the mottos of the reformation that have provided a summary of the main points of the reformed faith. Looking at the doctrine of salvation, we see how God in His grace has saved sinners like we are.

We begin a new study on the 5 Points of Calvinism:

Total Depravity

Unconditional election

Limited atonement

Irresistible grace

Perseverance of the saints

The 5 Points of Calvinism are all linked; you cannot have one without the other, The total depravity of man is foundational to our understanding of the other points.

The whole of the man: Every aspect of being human is corrupted by sin – every emotion, every word, every action by every person is corrupted by sin. Every aspect of our hearts and minds are under sin.

The whole of mankind: The whole of mankind is depraved. Everyone is depraved. Not one person is exempt. We are all sinful in the sight of God. Do you think you're exempt? Then ask yourself, "is it easier for you to do what is right or what is wrong?" It doesn't take much for us to choose to do what's wrong. A child doesn't need to be taught to disobey – sin is in their heart.

The definition: *"Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good and dead in sin is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto".* (Westminster Confession of Faith)

Because of sin, we are totally unable to save ourselves. We might help people, or be very generous, but spiritually, we are Hell-deserving sinners.

1) Biblical evidence for total depravity

In the beginning: Genesis 6:5 tells us that "every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually". It's not just sometimes, but all the time that we are affected by sin.

In the Psalms: Psalm 14:1 tells us that “there is none who does good.” All are depraved.

In the prophets: Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that “the heart is deceitful above all things”. All that we feel and think is rotten with our sinfulness.

In Jesus' words: John 8:44. When speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus said to them, “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.” Being religious doesn't make you a better person – religion might clean you up on the outside, but not in the heart.

In Paul's words: When looking back at his life before Christ, Paul saw that he was just full of “malice and envy.”

The total depravity of man is clearly evidenced in the Bible. The whole of humankind is damaged by sin. Injustice, racism, the abuse of power, greed, lying, evil thoughts come from within us. The problem of our sin lies not in our society, but in ourselves. Every thought, intention and desire we have of ourselves is evil.

2) Theological implications of total depravity

All are against God: In Romans 3, we read how no-one seeks for God. In Romans 5:10, we read that we are by nature enemies of God. The gospel call is for sinners to be reconciled to God. People do not seek after God. They try to live as though there is no God and would be rid of Him if they could. When God dwelt among man in flesh, man killed Him because He called Himself God.

All are helpless: There is nothing we can do to save or prepare ourselves for salvation. In Romans 8:8, we see that a fleshly mind cannot please God. You could do nothing. You were powerless before God.

All are blind: In 1 Corinthians 2:14, we read that “The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him.” Until the Spirit gives understanding, a person can hear the words of a sermon without really hearing or understanding. We were blind spiritually.

All are dead: All are dead spiritually without the Spirit of God. A dead person cannot see, hear or respond. You had no ability in yourself to respond to the gospel message unless God in His grace gives life.

Such is the depravity of man that even to see Jesus, if left to ourselves, we wouldn't come to Him or believe in Him. We can be good in the eyes of man, but without the Spirit of God in us, we are lifeless, hopeless and lost in our sin.

3) Causes of total depravity

Historical: In Genesis we see Adam and Eve disobey God and the result was that sin came into the world, where previously there had been no knowledge of sin. From the moment of that disobedience, every man was under sin.

From birth: In Psalm 51:5, David says that he was “conceived in sin”. We were all born under sin and a slave to sin. From the very beginning, we are sinners, depraved and unable to do good.

From our DNA: Original sin is the sin of Adam that's imputed to us. Sin is in the DNA of every human and so our spiritual DNA is corrupt and our physical DNA is corrupt (that's why we die). We sin as all we know is sin. We live in a sinful world with a sinful heart and all we can do of ourselves is sin.

4) Implications of total depravity

The absolute need of God's grace: We cannot change our heart or mind. We need One to change us. Romans 8:3 tells us that "God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do". We needed God to intervene, to take the initiative. We need a Saviour. We need a gracious God.

The absolute need of the Holy Spirit: Ezekiel 36-37 shows us how the Spirit of God gives life to dead bones. For the church to grow, for a sinner to be awakened to his need for a Saviour, for a sinner to be saved, we need the Spirit of God.

The absolute need for humility: We are not Christians because we're better than anyone else. Without God's grace and Spirit working in us, every desire of our heart and every thought we have is evil continually. We didn't save ourselves - we should be so humble. Yet often we stand in judgement of the unbeliever as if we could save ourselves. We were totally depraved, but have been saved by grace and grace alone. So there's no room for judgement - this is God's job to judge, and not ours. Instead of judgement, we should respond with pity for the unbeliever and gratitude that we have been saved.

The absolute need for God's Word: God uses His Word for the salvation of sinners. He uses His Word to open the eyes of sinners, to give them life. Many think of the Word of God as being outdated and no longer needed, but the Word of God is exactly what we need.

The absolute need to glorify God alone: If no part of our salvation is from ourselves, this shows us that it's to God alone be the glory. It's not the minister or his sermon that is worthy of praise, but God alone. A minister cannot save a sinner. We cannot save ourselves. It's God that does all the work and we are to glorify Him alone. If a sinner is saved, it's because God has saved Him. He is worthy of all the praise. Man is depraved. But God is greater than our sin. His grace is greater than our sin.