

Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible 013

Genesis 8:21

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Locate Genesis 8:21. We are continuing to make progress, believe it or not, in our study that we introduced a number of weeks back on "Neo-Calvinism vs. the Bible."

Neo-Calvinism vs. The Bible

- I. Calvinism's Mixed Blessing
- II. Why Critique Calvinism?
- III. The Source of Calvin's Theology
- IV. Calvin's Manner of Life
- V. **TULIP Through the Grid of Scripture**
- VI. Conclusion

There are the categories we have covered thus far. We are now at Roman numeral V, which is where we will be spending the most of our time in this series, on the Calvinistic doctrine of TULIP and comparing it to Scripture.

V. Running **TULIP** Through the Grid of Scripture

- A. **Total Depravity**
- B. **Unconditional Election**
- C. **Limited Atonement**
- D. **Irresistible Grace**
- E. **Perseverance of the Saints**

As you know in Calvinism, "T" of TULIP stands for Total Depravity, "U" for Unconditional

Election, "L" for Limited Atonement, "I" for Irresistible Grace, and "P" for Perseverance of the Saints. So what we are doing in this section is holding up what the Calvinists are saying and what they mean by these things against the light of Scripture, to see if these things be so.

So we started last time (prior to December 22, on which we did a Christmas message), on the "T" in Total Depravity.

A. Total Depravity

1. The starting point
2. **Total Depravity properly defined**
3. Calvinism: Total Depravity = inability
4. Calvinism's overstatement of Total Depravity

The "T" in Calvinism, Total Depravity, is a big deal, because if you believe what they say here, the whole rest of the system makes perfect sense. But as I am going to try to show you, I think what they have done with Total Depravity is taken a good concept that is in the Bible—I believe in total depravity, too—but are defining it differently from the Bible.

So what we started to do last time, in our last lesson on this, was to explain what total depravity is not—what is the proper biblical definition of total depravity?

Total Depravity

- What total depravity ***is not***:
 - ♦ Man is as evil as he can possibly be & indulges every possible sin
 - ♦ Man is incapable of doing good things
 - ♦ Gen. 3:22
 - ♦ Matt. 7:11
 - ♦ Acts 10:1-2
 - ♦ Rom. 2:14-15

And then from there, we will compare it to what Calvinism is saying about total depravity. So, total depravity does not mean that man is as evil as he can possibly be. Because even unbelievers apply the brakes in the crosswalk, right? (Hopefully.)

Also, total depravity does not mean that man indulges every possible sin. There are some sins that we have never committed, right? So there are probably some sins in your life that you have never done. Hopefully that is true, right? You did not commit every sin there is to commit before you came to Christ.

And total depravity does not mean that man is incapable of doing good things before his fellow man. I gave you a whole bunch of texts on that, at the bottom, to show you that it is true.

So with that being said, total depravity does not mean that man is as bad as he can be. It does not mean that man indulges every possible sin. It does not mean that man is incapable of doing good things. Well, what does it mean? Here are the two things to understand about total depravity:

1. What total depravity means is that every area of man's being has been touched by original sin. There is no facet of who I am as a human being, that has not been damaged in some way by original sin—including my mind. When man fell, he did not become sinful from the neck down. The intellect also has been contaminated by sin.

That is what "total" means. It is a statement, not of intensity. That is where the Calvinist errs. They think that total depravity means intensity, and that is really not what it means. It is not a statement of intensity or depth. It is a statement of breadth, because there is no facet of who I am, that has not been touched by original sin. "Total" also in the sense that every single human being other than Jesus has been contaminated by this disease of sin.

2. The second thing total depravity means is that man is incapable of doing anything to merit God's favor. So, a human being can do a lot of good things in the eyes of their fellow human beings as lost sinners, but they cannot do anything to merit God's favor other than to receive His grace, by faith alone, in Christ alone.

Total Depravity

- What total depravity *is*:
 - ♦ Every area of man's being is touched by sin
 - ♦ Intellect (Prov. 3:5-6; 14:12; 2 Cor. 4:4; Rom. 3:11a)
 - ♦ Conscience (1 Tim 4:2)
 - ♦ Will (Rom 1:28; 3:11b)
 - ♦ Deeds (Rom. 3:12)
 - ♦ Speech (Rom. 3:13-14)
 - ♦ Feet (Rom. 3:15)

That is what we mean by total depravity. But let's focus a little bit on this first one, which has a lot of supporting verses: every area of man's being has been touched by sin, including his intellect.

Proverbs 3:5-6, which we have on our refrigerators at home, and things like that, says,

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge Him,
And He will make your paths straight" (Proverbs 3:5-6).*

Why would Proverbs 3:5-6 say, "lean not on your own understanding" (paraphrase)? Because my understanding, the way I think, has been touched by original sin.

Proverbs 14:12 says,

*"There is a way which seems right to a man,
But its end is the way of death" (Proverbs 14:12).*

So there are certain things that, when we look at them, seem right. But unless we are analyzing those things from the grid of Scripture, we are going to come to the wrong conclusion. The reason Proverbs 14:12 says that certain things seem right to a man, is that my mind—our minds—have also been impacted by original sin.

Romans 3 is really big on this.

Romans 3:11 is a great statement on total depravity. It says,

"THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;" (Romans 3:11).

The reason it says, "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS," is that our minds have been contaminated by original sin.

Not only has my intellect been contaminated by original sin, but so has my conscience. What is conscience? We have talked about conscience before (Romans 2:14-15). It is that little barometer that God puts in the hearts of all people, whether they are saved or not, that either accuses them or excuses them based on their behavior (Romans 2:14-15).

So conscience is a good thing. It functions almost like pain. Pain is a good thing when you think about it. If my hand is on a stove and suddenly my hand is in pain, that is a good thing because that tells me to move my hand so that I do not destroy it. So in that sense, pain is my friend.

Well, that is how conscience functions. It is a barometer of God's law inside of all people. So the psychologists, you know, go around and say, "Well, the problem with human beings is that they feel guilty." And my explanation for that is, the reason they feel guilty is that they are guilty, because God makes them feel guilty, because of something called "conscience" in which He has taken His law (whether you have ever read the Bible or not) and put it into our hearts.

Now, the problem with conscience is that you can violate it so frequently that it loses its sensitizing power. And once a culture reaches that level, I would call it maximum degeneracy, in which conscience no longer is honored, or even felt. There is a society that is ripe for judgment. I call that maximum degeneracy.

I think that was the situation prior to the Flood, about which the Bible says that every inclination of man's heart was continually wicked (Genesis 8:21). And I think that was the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah before God brought fire and brimstone (Genesis 18:16-19:29). We have two examples of maximum degeneracy in the Scripture. I believe that our world is moving in that direction. And once God says, "That's enough," He will bring on the events of the Seven-Year Tribulation Period.

Anyway, just think of that word "conscience" as "con-," "with"; and "-science," "knowledge." That is what conscience is: with knowledge. It is a barometer that God has put into all people, helping them to ascertain right from wrong. So it is something called "conscience."

Adam and Eve were in that condition after the Fall. God said in Genesis 3:22, "They have become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (paraphrase). So even in their fallen state, conscience was active. But the frightening thing about conscience is you can violate it so many times that it loses its sensitizing power.

There is an example of that in 1 Timothy 4:2, where Paul says,

"by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience, as with a branding iron," (1 Timothy 4:2).

—Even their conscience was deadened. We had a situation in California in which there was a murderer, and it became a big deal in the 90s. It was the first execution that we had in California for a long, long time, because prior politicians had said that the death penalty in California is cruel and unusual punishment.

So finally, California decided to put someone to death. This particular individual, what he did was murdered two children at a park bench in a public place. He strangled them to death. And then after they were dead, he saw that they were eating MacDonald's hamburgers. And he sat down and he consumed their lunch—the rest of their lunch.

What do you do with a guy like that? You are dealing with someone that, in my view, needs to be put to death. Preach the gospel to him first, but execution—that is what capital punishment is there for. You are dealing with someone that had violated conscience so many times that he had no capacity to distinguish right from wrong.

So even our consciences themselves can be touched by original sin. Something else that is touched by original sin is our will: what we want. Romans 1:28 is a good passage on that issue. It says,

"And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper," (Romans 1:28).

They did not have a knowledge of God, because they did not want God, which is a will issue. Then going back to Romans 3:11, which we referred to a little earlier:

*"THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;" (Romans 3:11).*

So that is a will issue, of a will which has been touched by original sin.

Our deeds, what we do, have been touched by original sin. Romans 3:12 says,

*"ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME
USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE" (Romans 3:12).*

That is an action: *"THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE"* (Romans 3:12). So you see how original sin has impacted what we do. Now, what we do, as problematic as it is, is really not the main issue. The main issue is that what we do

often is dictated by a sin nature.

Then this next one hurts a little bit. Actually, it hurts a lot. How we talk has been contaminated by the sin nature. This two-by-two slab of mucous membrane between the gums, called the tongue, which is a body part, is not inherently evil in and of itself, but I oftentimes will lend that body part to the desires of the sin nature. Things can come out of our mouths that are very, very ungodly. You see this in Romans 3:13-14.

"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,"¹—

I am sorry to say this, but whenever I have listened to Howard Stern—which I do not anymore; have not for a long time—he is the first image that pops up, when I see this passage here. *"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,"²*—just the stunning, wicked, and vile things that come out of that man's mouth. I am amazed he is still on the air, to be frank with you. Not that I am keeping track of it or doing any primary research on this, but it is what it is.

*—"THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,
WITH THEIR TONGUES, THEY KEEP DECEIVING,"³—*

Well, sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me, right? Well, keep reading here. Doesn't poison kill? Doesn't the Bible teach that life and death are in the power of the tongue (Proverbs 18:21)? You can either make someone's day or break it simply by what you say.

*—"THE POISON of ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS";
'WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS';" (Romans
3:13-14).*

Jesus actually had a lot to say about this in Matthew 12:34. This is Jesus interacting with the Pharisees. (No wonder they wanted Him killed.)

"You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart" (Matthew 12:34).

Another way of saying it is, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (see Luke 6:45). The late Adrian Rogers used to say, "What comes up in the bucket was down in the well." In other words, if sarcasm, bitterness, humor at someone else's expense, all of that ugly stuff that we can get into,—if that stuff's coming out of my mouth; the mouth, or the tongue, is just a window to the heart. That is what is in my heart—is what Jesus is saying (Matthew 12:34; Luke 6:45).

¹ Romans 3:13.

² Romans 3:13.

³ Romans 3:13

On the other hand, if edification, praise to God, mercy, forgiveness, and grace—if those things come out of my mouth naturally, then that is what is in my heart. So that is just a great way of determining whether we, at any moment in time, as God's people, are in fellowship with God or not. It is largely dependent upon the things that come out of our mouth.

Then Jesus says in the same chapter,

"But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

And I, for one, am glad I am not going to be in that judgment, that my life is covered by the blood of the Lamb. But if you are unsaved, every careless word that you speak, you are going to be held accountable for it in that final day of judgment. I would say that would be a reference to the Great White Throne judgment.

Also, this is an interesting expression here: the "careless word" (Matthew 12:36). What is the "careless word"? The careless word is a word that is unscripted. You do not evaluate people by what they say when they have a script in front of them. Like me, for example: I am going to say a lot of godly things in this study, hopefully, because I have a script I am going by.

So that is not the careless word. That is the careful word. The careless word is what comes out of my mouth in a sudden event of some kind, when there is no script and there is no microphone, and I do not know if anybody is listening or not. The things that come out of my mouth in that moment are really a better judge of character—the careless word—than a careful word.

It is like these politicians. I remember this guy, Gordon Brown, who was running for some big office in Europe. And he was with one of his constituents, an older lady, who was rather reading him the riot act. He was very polite and very, very cordial. And then he got into his limousine, and did not know that the microphone was still on. (The open mic has wrecked more people's careers than any other single thing.)

And he just started railing on this lady when he was out of her earshot: "What a bigoted woman!" "What a close-minded woman!" So, as you probably know from that story, the press got hold of that and played it everywhere, and it ruined his chances for reelection and all of that stuff.

So the way Brown was acting when he was with the lady outside the limo was the careful word. But Jesus says that you do not evaluate someone by the careful word (Matthew 12:34, 36). Of course he is going to be careful. He has a script. You evaluate his true character by what he is saying inside the limo, when he thinks that the microphone is off.

This is very, very convicting stuff because we are basically a nation of talkers. We have talk radio. We have all these TV shows where people are talking. People talk endlessly. And unlike the old days, everyone has a microphone today. Have you noticed that? Before

internet and social media, the people that had the microphones were the experts. Well, that has all changed. Now, anybody, expert or non-expert, has a microphone.

So you could be, you know, in your parents' basement and typing out a bunch of stuff, and rattling out a bunch of stuff. That is the way our culture is. We are a culture of, basically, talkers. And the Bible is saying, "Be quick to hear, but slow to speak" (James 1:19, paraphrase). It is just getting harder and harder to do that in this climate that we are living in.

So, total depravity has touched our communication. If you really want to be convicted about this—and you guys seem a little convicted as I am talking, you guys look pretty quiet out there—if you want further conviction, recommended reading is James 3:1-12. There is a whole unit there on the tongue, and how it can be used as an instrument of Satan.

What else has been touched by original sin? My feet have been touched by original sin. My feet take me from one thing to the next. Romans 3:15 says,

"THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD," (Romans 3:15).

Total Depravity

- What total depravity *is*:
 - ♦ Every area of man's being is touched by sin (cont'd)
 - ♦ Heart (Mark 7:21; Eph 4:18)
 - ♦ Body (Gen 3:19; Rom. 8:23)
 - ♦ Total being (Rom 1:18–3:20)
 - ♦ Man is incapable of earning merit favor from God (Isa 64:6; Eph. 2:8-9)

And my heart, which is really the issue, has been touched by original sin. Notice Ephesians 4:18. It says,

"being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;" (Ephesians 4:18).

So it is our inner being which controls, or influences, the tongue; controls, or influences, the direction of my feet; and controls, or influences, my mind. So, original sin is so severe that it has touched the innermost being of who we are, which is the heart, the "kardia" [καρδιά].

And obviously, the heart in Ephesians 4:18 is not the physical bodily part that is pumping and keeping us alive. It is more of a statement of the part of us—the soul, the "psyche" [ψυχή]; sometimes called the "spirit,"—that will live forever. Our innermost being has been touched and contaminated by original sin.

So we have verses like Jeremiah 17:9 in the Bible (the classic verse on this):

*"The heart is more deceitful than all else
And is desperately sick;
Who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).*

That is an amazing statement on what human beings are like in original sin. At their core being they have a heart that is deceitful. They cannot even figure it out. Half the time it is sick, meaning it needs a doctor. And "who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9).

You feel jealousy towards somebody, or bitterness towards somebody, or unforgiveness towards somebody, or you start to gossip about somebody, and then you have to catch yourself and say, "Wait a minute, that is not who I am in Christ. Why do I act this way, Lord? Why is it that I always have this propensity to do what You say I should stay away from? Why is it that You say 'a' and I want to do 'b'? Why is that?"

Well, because it is part of who we are in original sin. We have natures that are at war with our Creator. You never have to set your kids down and say, "Okay, we are going to teach you how to sin today. You ready? All right, let's do a few practice sessions. Here is how you throw a tantrum. Let me do it a couple times just to give you the feel of it. And then you will pick up on it."

We are like that already. You do not have to sit your kids down and say, "Okay, we are going to teach you how to hoard your toys today and be selfish." We all know how to do that. What our parents had to instruct us in is how to be patient with people. How to be kind to people. How to treat others the way we want to be treated. Those are unnatural to us. The other things come very, very naturally, because of our heart.

I had you open up to Genesis 8:21. (This is Post-Flood.)

"The LORD smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man,...'" (Genesis 8:21).

In other words, the Flood cleansed the world externally. I would understand that the Flood took care of all of the rebels and the offspring of the rebels, who were the Nephilim, which is a subject that is too big to get into here. But my point is that the Flood waters fixed the outside, but the Flood waters never fixed the inside. Because inside the Ark were eight sin natures.

There were eight people in the Ark: Noah and Mrs. Noah, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, and their respective wives. And from Noah's sons the earth was repopulated. So what

happened in the Post-flood world was, yeah, the externals were fixed, but not the internals: the sin nature just got passed down.

"The Lord smelled the soothing aroma; and the Lord said to Himself, 'I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth; and I will never again destroy every living thing, as I have done'" (Genesis 8:21).

So there is your program under which, yeah, God fixed the outside. But the insides of people need to be fixed still. And only a Messiah that is coming, Jesus Christ, can do that. Jesus talked about the heart very, very frequently, because as human beings, we have a tendency to focus on the outside of people.

Yet that is not the problem. The problem is that they have a nature that is at war with God. So Jesus says this in Mark 7:20-23. The context of Mark 7:20-23 is that the Pharisees were criticizing Jesus and His disciples for eating on the Sabbath. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, did not see it as a problem, because the Sabbath was designed to be a benefit to man. So the Pharisees had lost sight of the Sabbath. It is in that context that Jesus says this:

"And He was saying, 'That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man'" (Mark 7:20-23).

"Hold on, guys." Jesus is saying to the Pharisees, as they are criticizing Him for letting His disciples eat on the Sabbath. "It is not what a man takes into him that makes him morally corrupt. It is what flows out of him naturally" (Mark 7:20-23, paraphrase).

So, here we are as human beings, focused on the external things. Jesus is focused on the internal things, because that is ultimately what is going to fix somebody. More education is not going to help people. Do you know what one of the most literate societies was, of all time, in terms of literacy rates and so-called PhD's per capita? It was Nazi Germany.

So just giving more people more education does not help people. If you educate a blue collar thief, he turns into a white collar thief. If you educate a thief, the only thing that you have done is increased his ability to steal. What that person needs is an internal change that only Jesus can give. That is why Jesus talked a lot about being born again (John 3)—being born from above.

Everybody's focused on the external. Jesus is focused on the internal. In fact, a verse just came to me as I was thinking out loud just now: John 2:23-25. It says,

"Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name, observing His signs which He was doing. But Jesus, on his part, was not entrusting Himself to them, for He knew all men, and because He did not need anyone to testify concerning man, for He Himself knew what was in man" (John 2:23-25).

So there were people that believed on Jesus in John 2. If you followed our series on John, which we did a number of years back, I tried to make the case that those who believed on Him were actually believers—true believers. Go back into that series to get the evidence for that. But Jesus did not entrust Himself to certain believers because they had not had a chance to grow yet, and become disciples.

And why did Jesus not entrust Himself to everyone? Because he knew what was in the hearts of people. It says there at the end of John 2:25, *"for He Himself knew what was in man."*

So, your Bible is very, very unique in the sense that it deals with the inner parts of people and explains to us why we are the way we are. We have a nature that is at war with God. In fact, our nature is so corrupted that God's agenda for us when we get saved, which happens immediately upon faith alone in Christ alone, is to give us a new nature. In 2 Peter 1:3-4, you will see "the divine nature."

Our nature is so corrupted that God does not try to rehabilitate our nature—that is how far gone it is. He just gives us a new nature. So as a Christian, you have two natures: the sin nature and your new nature. The sin nature is reckoned dead. In other words, you do not have to obey it anymore. But it is there to still tempt you. Have you noticed that it is always saying, "Come on back"?

But this time around, because you have Jesus in your life in a new nature, you do not have to obey it. And you now have the new nature, which has brand new desires. So the way to become a disciple of Christ is to learn to routinely reckon dead the yearnings of the old nature and live according to the desires of the new nature.

Jesus gives you examples of what the old nature is like:

"...fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man" (Mark 7:21-23).

Yes, original sin is such that it has even affected our bodies. Paul in Romans 8:23 talks about the physical body. He says that our universe is in a state of travail because of original sin (Romans 8:23). And that even includes our physical bodies. Romans 8:23 says,

"And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the

Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves,"⁴—

Did you wake up this morning groaning?

*—"waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body"
(Romans 8:23).*

You wake up in a groaning body and you say, "Lord, I cannot wait for the manifestation of the sons of God and the redemption of this body." That is just another example of total depravity. Original sin has affected our physical being. God was very clear on this when our forebears fell in Eden. He said,

*"By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread,
Till you return to the ground,
Because from it you were taken;
For you are dust,
And to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19).*

In other words, because of original sin, you originally came from the dirt, and you are going right back into the dirt.

Genesis 3:19 is a very important verse, by the way, because a lot of people today are teaching that death was always part of God's program. Theistic evolutionists and old-earth creationists do this all the time. They act as though, well, death was always part of God's program. And when God says "The day you eat from the tree of knowledge is the day you will die" (Genesis 2:17, paraphrase), they say that is just spiritual death, not physical death, because physical death was always around.

Well, if physical death was always around, that kind of cheapens why Jesus came into the world, does it not? I thought that Jesus came into the world to get rid of the last enemy, which is death (1 Corinthians 15:26). So why Jesus came is marginalized if death was always part of the program. Why did Jesus have to get rid of it?

Beyond that, Adam and Eve did die spiritually that day in Eden. They were spiritually separated from God. But there is a lot more to it than that. Their physical bodies started to die. They started to go right back into the ground from which they came. Now, so close to the events of the Fall in Eden, it took a while for them to physically die. Adam lived 930 years, but he eventually died: Genesis 5 tells us.

The oldest living man in the Bible is Enoch, who did not have to die, because he was raptured to heaven. So he got in as an escape from death. Methuselah lived 969 years, and he died. Enoch, though, got a pass from death. I am hoping that we are that generation that experiences the Rapture that we will not have to physically die. I think we

⁴ Romans 8:23.

might be, but that is just my opinion. I cannot guarantee that. It is not a "thus saith the Lord."

I think the Rapture, though, is pretty near. Do you agree with that? Maybe we will be the generation that will not have to die. But death is becoming a reality because of original sin. Paul himself died. In 2 Corinthians 4:16 he says,

"Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).

"Why is it, Lord, that my outer man is decaying? Why is it that my high school yearbook picture looks different from my modern day driver's license?" "Well, that is original sin." "Well, Lord, I am depressed because of that."

A lot of people, particularly when their whole presence and self-image, and sometimes livelihood, is based on how they look—like these actors and actresses—actually become suicidal when this process, which has always been going on in their bodies, reaches a certain level. But a Christian does not have to lose heart because *"our inner man," the new nature, "is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16).*

That is how, as a Christian, you can look at old age and actually look at it with an optimistic perspective, because God's doing something on the inside which outdoes what is already going on on the outside.

But woe to the person that does not have that biblical perspective. Their whole emotional and psychological well-being is built on what is going on on the outside, which, if I am reading my Bible correctly, is a losing battle. We are going right back to the dirt from which we came.

So Genesis 3:19 is not only a verse on spiritual death. It is a verse on physical death, meaning that physical death did not exist in Genesis 1-2. That is why our forebears were vegetarian—they were herbivorous. You will see that around Genesis 1:28-31. Because if you are carnivorous, you have to kill an animal. But there was no death in this world, so they were herbivorous.

Man is not given permission to be carnivorous until Genesis 9, in the New Covenant. So go out today and get your steak, and do not feel bad about it, because God changed the rules in Genesis 9. But that is not how it always was. And the old-earth creationists and theistic evolutionists really downplay this, and make it sound as if death is something that has always existed, which is not what your Bible teaches.

So, original sin has affected our physical bodies. And why not just lay it all out here? Original sin has affected my total being. Some good reading on that is Romans 1:18-3:20, which is the "Sin" section of Romans, in which the gospel of Jesus Christ and the love of God are not presented a single time.

Romans 1:1-17 is the "Salutation," and then after the salutation there is the "Sin" section (all these sections begin with the letter "S") which tells us that our total being has been corrupted by sin. It is not until Paul deals extensively with that subject (of total depravity) that finally, in Romans 3:21-5:21, he gets into salvation. Because as Moody, I think, said, you cannot get a man saved till you get him lost.

If you want to know why you need the life preserver, Romans 1:18-3:20 will explain that to you.

Romans 1:18-31: the Gentile world is guilty.

Romans 2:1-14: the religious world is guilty.

Romans 2:15-3:8: The Jewish world is guilty.

And Paul says, let's just put all our cards on the table: the whole world is guilty, Romans 3:9-20. There is nothing in that section about the love of God or the gospel at all, because you cannot understand soteriology, the doctrine of salvation, until you understand hamartiology, the doctrine of sin.

What incentive do I have to reach out for a life preserver if I do not realize that I am drowning? It is like going to your doctor and he says, "You look great. Your tests are great. Everything's perfect. But I am going to do some invasive surgery anyway. Do you mind?" "No, thank you, doctor." You go to your doctor and he says, "You have about three weeks to live. Can I do some invasive surgery?" "Yes, please."

That is why Romans is logically set up the way it is set up. In fact, there was a time in American history when they used Romans in our law schools as an example of how to logically argue a case. I think things have changed a bit since then. But you can see that practice in some of our early law schools.

Romans is the most beautiful, logically structured book you could ever give your mind to. Things are introduced in their right order at the right time, and you do not have soteriology other than a few references to it, as Paul is greeting his audience in Romans 1. You do not have soteriology until you have hamartiology.

"Hamartia" [ἁμαρτία] is the word for "sin" in Greek. "Soteria" [σωτηρία] is the word for "salvation." From the Greek, hamartiology is what the Bible says about sin: what we are looking at here. Soteriology is what the Bible says about salvation.

Your average person that drives past this church—you know what they are thinking? "Oh, that is just for the religious people over there. I mean, I really do not need that."

Well, the reason you do not think you need it is that you do not understand hamartiology. If you understood what God said about you in Romans 1:18-3:20, how depravity and original sin has affected every part of your being, and consequently you are hurtling on a collision course as we speak with the judgment of God—if you understood that, you would be open to the gospel. But you are not open to the gospel because Satan has blinded

your minds.

So this is a little bit about what biblical total depravity means. It is not a statement of intensity. It is a statement of extent. And in this condition, although we have not indulged every sin that can be indulged; and although I have not committed every sin that can be committed; and even though in this state I am still capable of doing good things in the eyes of my fellow man; I cannot do a single thing to merit God's favor in my natural self.

Religion will send more people to hell than anything else, I am convinced, because people in religion think that they can do something to get God to like them more, or to be accepted unto God. But our depraved condition will not allow that.

Isaiah 64:6 is a classic, classic verse on this.

*"For all of us have become like one who is unclean,
And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment;
And all of us wither like a leaf,
And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6).*

Now notice this phrase: *"And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment"* (Isaiah 64:6). It does not say that my unrighteous deeds are as a filthy garment. It says that my righteous deeds are as a filthy garment.

What are righteous deeds? Those are the things that we try to do in our depraved state, to merit God's favor—which is the definition of religion. I am an expert in it: I was one of the most religious people, before I got saved.

Finally I was asked the question, when I was 16, by someone who understood the true gospel, "Well, if you were to stand before the Lord and you were to argue for admittance into heaven, why should the Lord let you in?"

And boy, I had a list and I sure used the pronoun "I" an awful lot in my explanation. "I have lived a good life. I am a sincere person. I have tried hard. I am an altar boy in the Episcopal church. I have the whole Episcopal church service memorized. I am the one that they gave a large cross to that I wore around my neck for perfect Sunday school attendance record. I am the one that memorized the Ten Commandments."

Obviously I did not understand them, but I had them memorized. Because if you understand the Ten Commandments, the Ten Commandments say that my heart has committed sins that my hands have not gotten around to yet. That is what Jesus was getting at in the Sermon on the Mount, by the way. He was getting at the true nature of the Ten Commandments: that they deal with the heart, particularly the last one, *"Thou shalt not covet"* (Exodus 20:17; Deuteronomy 5:21). Isn't coveting a heart issue?

So the law of God stands in judgment, not just on what I do, but on what I think and on my motives. So as I was in that condition, how was God looking at all of my works of

righteousness that I had rattled off? He saw them as a filthy garment (Isaiah 64:6), because in my depraved state, there is nothing that I can do to merit God's favor other than to receive salvation as a free gift.

Now, if you, by faith, want to receive salvation as a free gift, God says, "Now we are in business. We can talk about that, but as long as you are walking around saying, 'I have done this, and I have done that, and God therefore is bound to accept me,' then those are just like righteous deeds that are nothing more than a filthy garment (Isaiah 64:6)." Because, in my total depravity, I cannot do anything to merit God's favor, although I can do a lot of stuff that looks good in the eyes of my fellow man; even though I have not indulged every sin that can be indulged; and even though I am not as bad as I could be.

That is why we have in our Bible Ephesians 2:8-9, which you know well. There is one thing I can do to merit God's favor, and that is to trust in the work of His Son. And when you trust in the work of His Son, that is not a work. You say, "Well, how do you know that?" And Calvinists are very confused on this.

I know that because I have Romans 4:4-5 in my Bible. Romans 4:4-5 says,

"Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness" (Romans 4:4-5).

So there is one thing I can do in my depraved state to be justified before God: I can trust in the provision of His Son that he made for me 2,000 years ago, and receive it as a gift, consequently. But other than that, there is absolutely nothing I can do to merit God's favor.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Boy, when I was reading off my laundry list of religious activities, I had something to boast in, did I not? Look at how many times I used the the personal pronoun "I." But in God's system, there are no bragging rights, because we did not do the work—Jesus did it. We just received it as a gift by way of faith.

So that is a little bit of teaching on depravity. Total depravity, if you do not understand it correctly, is the starting point in the Calvinistic system. If you buy into what they are saying about total depravity, all the other points in Calvinism logically make sense. But as I am going to show you, they have overstated depravity.

You cannot understand that Calvinists have overstated depravity until you understand what the Bible says about depravity. Depravity does not mean two things:

1. It does not mean that we are as bad as we can possibly be.

2. It does not mean that we have indulged every possible sin.

What does it mean? It means that every facet of my being has been touched by original sin, including my intellect. And in that depraved condition. I cannot do anything to merit God's favor other than to trust the work of the Savior.

So that takes us here to number 3.

A. Total Depravity

1. The starting point
2. Total Depravity properly defined
3. **Calvinism: Total Depravity = inability**
4. Calvinism's overstatement of Total Depravity

I will just introduce this: how has Calvinism overstated total depravity? Total depravity is a pretty heavy doctrine, right? Well, what you will find in Calvinism is that they have taken something that is good in terms of a teaching, and they have placed far too much emphasis on it.

So now that you know what we mean by total depravity, what does Calvinism teach that total depravity means? Notice this quote from Bob Kirkland critiquing Calvinism:

"'T' in Calvinism stands for 'Total Depravity.'"⁵

Well, what does Total Depravity mean? What they mean by that is that:

"Man is completely and wholly depraved and has no ability whatsoever to respond (repent or believe)"—which we take as synonyms—"to God until he is first 'regenerated' by God."⁶

So what they mean by Total Depravity is inability. You are an inanimate object—like a

⁵ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

⁶ Bob Kirkland, *Calvinism: None Dare Call It Heresy; Spotlight on the Life and Teachings of John Calvin* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails, 2018), 34.

rock—like this wooden podium in front of me here. Preaching the gospel to a wooden podium would not help the podium because it is an inanimate object. So what is going to help the podium?

Well, God has to do a work on the front end, meaning, not just conviction of the need to trust Christ, which is what God does for all of us. We cannot come to Christ on our own unless we are first convicted by the Holy Spirit and drawn. But as we are drawn through volition, we have the power to make a decision.

Calvinism says, "No, even when God convicts you, it would be like convicting this wooden podium." Well, then, how do people get saved according to Calvinism? God comes in on the front end and imparts to the podium the gift of faith. God comes in on the front end and imparts to the podium regeneration.

So what they teach is that regeneration precedes faith. You have to be born again so you can believe. But your Bible says the exact opposite. The Bible says that you believe after being convicted, and then you are born again. Calvinism reverses that: puts regeneration first on the front end. And they call this the gift of faith.

Well, who gets the gift of faith? Does everybody get the gift of faith? "Nope. Only the elect get it." If you are so fortunate that you are one of the small fraction of humanity called the elect, then you get the gift of faith. Everyone else stays just like a podium; and they go to hell with no choice in the matter whatsoever.

Well, why in the world would you teach something like that? Because Calvinists misunderstand total depravity. They do not define total depravity the way we have defined it; but they define total depravity as inability: being in an insensate state.

Calvinists make a big deal about Ephesians 2:1, which says,

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins," (Ephesians 2:1).

Now at Calvinist colleges and schools, this is how they suck in the youth. This is why there is a massive revival of Calvinism going on as I speak, amongst the youth, at places called the Gospel Coalition, Together for the Gospel, etc.

How do Calvinists pull so many young people into this system? Well, they pull out Ephesians 2:1 which says, *"you were dead in your trespasses and sins."* Then they define "death." They do not define "death" by how the Bible defines it: as separation (more on that coming); but as inability.

So Calvinists will say to a young person, "What can a dead person do?" And the young person says, "Absolutely nothing." Then once the young person buys into that understanding of total depravity, then the Calvinists move into their soteriology of, well, then people, who do not have an ability to respond because they are just like a rock or a podium, get saved because they are imparted the gift of faith. And regeneration precedes

faith, and only the elect receive that.

So they will go from a wrong definition of "dead," which they define as nonexistence—which is a twentieth and twenty-first century definition of "dead," but not a biblical definition, as I will show you. From "dead" in Ephesians 2:1 they go into Ephesians 2:5—He *"made us alive together with Christ."*

Well, what does *"He made us alive together with Christ" (Ephesians 2:5)* mean? According to Calvinists, it means that God gave you the gift of faith—He regenerated you first so that you could believe, because you must be one of the elect. See how this works?

What Calvinists have done is misdefined "dead." Maybe in the twentieth and twenty-first century medical dictionaries, "dead" means "nonexistence." But that is not what the biblical word means. I will give you the lexical evidence for the biblical word as this study progresses.

"Death" means "separation"; and *"made us alive" (Ephesians 2:5)* does not mean that you are regenerated first so that you can believe. Nor does it mean being given the gift of faith. The only thing *"made us alive" (Ephesians 2:5)* means is that we received Christ, upon conviction by the Holy Spirit, and we were born again.

Ephesians 2:5 does not tell us how God made us alive. The Calvinist reads the gift of faith into the passage—regeneration precedes faith. Why does that have to happen? Because Calvinists have misdefined "dead" as "nonexistence," when that is not what the word "death" means, as I will show you; and I will give you quotes of Calvinists teaching it.

You might be saying, "Well, wait a minute. My favorite Bible teachers are Calvinists. They would not say that." Well, come back next week. I am going to just drown you in quote, after quote, after quote, which show that this is what they teach around the clock.