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# Grace Fellowship Church

*Delighting in God's Sovereign Saving Grace,  
to the Glory of God!*

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## **The Doctrine of Total Inability:**

Because of the Fall, no human is able of himself to savingly believe the gospel—  
our salvation must begin with a work of God.

### **Original Sin → Total Depravity → Total Inability**

*Original sin* (sin derived from our origin):

- Sinfulness marks everyone from birth and is present in a motivationally twisted heart prior to any actual sins committed (Gen 6:5-6; 8:21; 1 Kgs 8:46; Ps 14:1-3; 51:5; Ecc 9:3; Eph 2:3)

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... – Gen 6:5

- This inner sinfulness is the root of our sins (Jer 17:9; Eph 2:1-3; 4:17-19)
- It is derived in us from Adam, our first representative before God (Rom 5:12-21)

Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... – Rom 5:12

*Total Depravity:*

- Makes explicit the implications of original sin
- Speaks to the pervasiveness and effect of sin in our person, not the degree of depravity (i.e. we're not saying that everyone is as bad as they possibly could be)
- No single part of us is untouched by sin, but every component of our being is effected by the corruption of the curse and our sin nature

1. The **mind** has become darkened with respect to spiritual things: (2 Cor 4:4; Rom 8:5-8; Eph 4:17-18; Col 1:21)

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. – 1 Cor 2:14

2. The **affections** have been perverted by sin: (Gen 6:5; 8:21; Job 15:14-16; Is 59:2; Jer 17:9; Mk 7:21-23)

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. – Jn 3:19

3. The **will** is in bondage to sinful desires: (Job 14:4; John 5:40, 43-44; 6:44; Titus 3:3)

Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then also you can do good who are accustomed to do evil. – Jer 13:23

- These considerations are true for every human! (1 Kgs 8:46; Is 53:6; Rom 3:9-23; Gal 3:22; Eph 2:1-3)

Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins. – Ecc 7:20

### **Total Inability (The result of the above considerations!)**

Because of the pervasiveness of the corruption in the core of our being, *no person is capable of (1) doing that which is pleasing in God's sight, or, (2) coming to God in their own strength and wisdom.*

1. No one can do good spiritually good deeds on their own volition (Is 64:6; Jer 13:23; Jn 15:4-5; Rom 5:7-8)

A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. – Mt 7:18

2. No one can come to God in repentance and faith on their own (Mt 11:27; Jn 3:3, 5; 14:17; 1 Cor 12:3; 2 Cor 4:4; Rev 14:3)

All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. – Mt 11:27  
No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. – Jn 6:44-45

This is why every person must be born a second time... (Jn 1:12-13)

Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'" – Jn 3:5-7

## Total Inability in Pictures

In Scriptures, salvation is pictured in various ways: the dead being raised, a new creation, a new heart being implanted, or the blind receiving sight. In *none* of these metaphors can the one receiving salvation possibly be seen to contribute anything! In fact, the whole point of the pictures is to show how hopeless and helpless we are on our own! What can a dead man do to bring himself back to life? What can a blind man do to give himself sight? (Jn 3:3, 5; Eph 2:1-3; 2 Cor 4:3-6; 5:17)

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. – Ezek 36:26-27

## Do humans have a free will?

Yes and no. Humans will always act according to their nature. The will is bound only by what the mind thinks and what the affections desire. To illustrate, think of how the will operates in the animal kingdom. Hang fifty pounds of raw steak in a cage and put a leopard and a zebra in with it. The zebra will eat the grass around the meat. The leopard will eat the meat (and maybe the zebra!) because each of them are freely “willing” according to their nature.

But what if you were to paint the zebra so he looks like a leopard and then put him back in the cage... what does he do? The same thing! He must act according to his nature and zebras, by nature, are herbivores.

Man is a sinner by nature (original sin). Since sin has warped the way he thinks (his mind) and what he desires (his affections), he will freely use his will to rebel against God and disbelieve God’s Word.

Is a man’s will free? Yes! Will his free will bring him to come to put his trust in Jesus? No! Since his nature is sinful—he needs to be changed from the core of his being.

## Then how can we repent and believe?

Even repentance and faith are gifts of God that He must work in us (Rom 9:16)

“When they heard these things they fell silent. And they glorified God, saying, “Then to the Gentiles also *God has granted repentance* that leads to life.” – Acts 11:18

“For by grace you have been saved through *faith*. And *this* is not your own doing; *it is the gift of God*, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.” – Eph 2:8

## Do all Christians believe this? Why does it matter?

This is the historic doctrine of the church, but many have been uncomfortable with it through the years. Why? Typically for the same reasons that we don’t like to think about ourselves in the categories we’ve discussed: we’re proud and we like to think better of ourselves than we ought. We don’t want to admit that in and of myself I can contribute nothing to my salvation, but that it depends on God’s sovereign grace alone.

The Arminian scheme of looking at things suggests that while humanity was affected by Adam’s sin, we maintain a certain measure of innocence because of God’s “prevenient grace.” In this view, man is not “totally” depraved and hence, not totally incapable of spiritual good, or of choosing God. Therefore, it is thought that all man needs to do is to choose Christ. In one sense it would be nice to believe this (it sure appeals to our flesh!). The trouble is that it is biblically indefensible. It is interesting—and should be noted—that the gospel presentations in the Bible never use words like, “Just choose Jesus,” or “Ask Jesus into your heart.” The gospel of the Bible is always repent from your sins and trust on the finished work of Jesus!

This matters because how we view the fallen state of humanity determines how we view salvation, Christ’s cross-work, God’s grace, and ultimately, God himself! Let’s flesh that out some more...

## Application: Speak of Your Salvation (1 Chr 16:23)!

1. How does this help us to think right thoughts about God / His character?
2. How does this impact evangelism? How can we use it in promoting the gospel?
3. How does this aid in our corporate worship?
4. How does this help us to encourage our own souls?
5. How does this give us something to say back to our Accuser?
6. How does this prepare us for heaven?
7. How can we use this to encourage one another in the faith?
8. How will this help promote cross-centered authenticity between one-another?