

Podcast: Confessing the Faith

Episode 8: Calvinism - Total Depravity

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Introduction

Remember that we are in the middle of a series on the doctrine of salvation. We are talking about Calvinism and today we come to the doctrine of total depravity

It would probably be good for us to remember where have been over the past few episodes. Where have we been?

CTF004-2015-08-31 - Calvinism - First Things First - Introductory Remarks; Addressing Common Misconceptions

CTF005-2015-09-17 - Calvinism - First Things First - What is our Authority for Truth?

CTF006-2015-10-13 - Calvinism - First Things First - God's Sovereignty, and All Things for the Glory of God

CTF007-2015-11-11 - Calvinism - Unconditional Election

Q1: What question is the doctrine of total depravity seeking to answer?

1. What is man's condition apart for the saving work of Christ? What is the *natural* man's condition after the fall and apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit?
2. What is man able to do, and not able to do, in and of himself?
3. As it pertains to the doctrine of salvation we are asking, can the natural man come to Christ freely and willingly apart from God's gracious intervention?

Q2: What does the doctrine of total depravity assert?

1. The doctrine recognizes the Biblical teaching that men and women, in their natural and fallen state, are not basically neutral, much less are they basically good, but they are totally depraved. This means that the human nature is corrupt, wicked, twisted. We are, in our natural and fallen state, "dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body" (London Baptist Confession 6.2). From the moment Adam fell (and all humanity with him) man "[has] 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 [for conversion]" (London Baptist Confession 9.3).

Q3: So the word depravity is obviously referring to our sinfulness, or our fallen and corrupt nature. What are we to think when we hear the word "total" in the phrase "total depravity"?

1. It is not that we are all as bad as we could be.
 - a. I rejoice at the good that non-Christians do.
 - b. This goodness is by the grace of God.
 - c. This goodness is not unto salvation, nor does it prepare us for salvation.
 - d. This goodness is not good in an ultimate sense.
 - i. Though we might call a deed a good deed, it is not flowing from a good heart
 1. "No one is good except God alone." (Mark 10:18, ESV)
 2. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find." (Romans 7:18, NKJV)
 - ii. It is not done by faith.
 1. "For whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23, ESV)
 - iii. It is not done to the glory of God.
 1. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God..." (Romans 3:23, ESV)
 - iv. Our righteousness is like a filthy rag

1. “But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6, NKJV)
 - v. The heart matters. Worship matters.
2. Depravity is total in that every aspect of man’s being - all of his “faculties and parts of soul and body” - are corrupt and bent towards evil.
3. Depravity is total in that it is universal. This is the state into which all of humanity is born, given that Adam is our federal head.

Q4: This doctrine is difficult for people to accept because a lot of people think of themselves as being basically good. What does the Bible have to say about that?

1. That people do *some* good (relatively speaking) does not mean that they *are* good.
2. The question is not, do we do some good. The question is, are we guilty or innocent?
 - a. Ten Commandments
 - b. “What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: ‘None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.’ ‘Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.’ ‘The venom of asps is under their lips.’ ‘Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.’ ‘Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.’ ‘There is no fear of God before their eyes.’ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.” (Romans 3:9–25, ESV)
3. So even if you think of yourself as a rather good person as you compare yourself to other men, you are not good before God. You stand guilty before God.
4. As we’ve said before, even the good we do do is sin apart from faith in Christ and to the glory of God.

Q5: A basic overview of total depravity has been given. Is this what the scriptures teach?

1. Man is spiritually dead
 - a. “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, 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.’” (Genesis 2:16–17, ESV)
 - b. “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—” (Romans 5:12, ESV)
 - c. “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Ephesians 2:1–3, ESV)
 - d. “And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,” (Colossians 2:13, ESV)
 - e. “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.’” (John 3:5–7, ESV)

- f. "But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:12–13, ESV)
 - g. Think of Lazarus
2. Man has a dark heart and a corrupt mind
- a. "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." (Genesis 6:5, ESV)
 - b. "And when the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma, the LORD said in his heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, for the intention of man's heart is evil from his youth. Neither will I ever again strike down every living creature as I have done." (Genesis 8:21, ESV)
 - c. "This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead." (Ecclesiastes 9:3, ESV)
 - d. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9, ESV)
 - e. "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person." (Mark 7:21–23, ESV)
 - f. "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:19, ESV)
 - g. "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Romans 8:7–8, ESV)
 - h. "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 Corinthians 2:14, ESV)
 - i. "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity." (Ephesians 4:17–19, ESV)
 - j. "for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8, ESV)
 - i. "He [the Father] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." (Colossians 1:13–14, ESV)
 - k. "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled." (Titus 1:15, ESV)
3. Man is in bondage to sin and Satan
- a. "You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44, ESV)
 - b. "And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, *following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—*" (Ephesians 2:1–2, ESV)
 - c. "And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will." (2 Timothy 2:24–26, ESV)
 - d. "By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother." (1 John 3:10, ESV)

- e. "We know that we are from God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one." (1 John 5:19, ESV)
 - f. "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.'" (John 8:34, ESV)
 - g. "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness." (Romans 6:20, ESV)
 - h. "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:20–23, ESV)
 - i. "For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another." (Titus 3:3, ESV)
4. This bondage is universal
- a. "Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you." (Psalm 143:2, ESV)
 - b. "Who can say, 'I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin'?" (Proverbs 20:9, ESV)
 - c. "What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'" (Romans 3:9–12, ESV)
5. Man is unable to change - total inability is really the point
- a. "You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit." (Matthew 7:16–18, ESV)
 - b. "Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for the tree is known by its fruit." (Matthew 12:33, ESV)
 - c. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day." (John 6:44, ESV)
 - d. "And he said, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.'" (John 6:65, ESV)
 - e. "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 Corinthians 2:14, ESV)
 - f. "For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7, ESV)
 - g. "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each." (1 Corinthians 3:5, ESV)

Q6: Don't all Christians believe this?

- 1. Not at all.
- 2. Many see man as neutral, not averse to the things of God; wounded, but not dead; as objects of God's love, but not Children of wrath, able to, in and of themselves, lay hold of God.
 - a. Pelagius vs. Augustine
 - b. Arminius vs. Calvin
- 3. "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." (Ephesians 2:8–9, ESV)