

Week 7 - Total Depravity

All Have Sinned

? Do you think people are inherently good or bad? Why?

? What is sin? What does it mean that we are sinners?

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NIV)

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

This study launches our look at another aspect of the Reformation, one most often associated with John Calvin, though it has its roots in earlier theologians and reformers. “The issue of the nature of salvation has been debated throughout church history. Some of the more pressing questions include: What is the proper balance between God’s sovereignty and God’s love in the salvation process? What is the nature of God’s grace, and how does it work in a human life? To what degree has sin affected human freedom? And does human freedom play a central role in conversion?” (*Across the Spectrum*, pg. 133). One approach to these questions is summarized by the acronym TULIP.

T--Total Depravity

U--Unconditional Election

L--Limited Atonement

I--Irresistible Grace

P--Perseverance of the Saints

We’ll spend several small group studies unpacking these concepts.

? What are the consequences of sin? How have you seen these in your life or the lives of those you know?

? What does it mean to gratify the cravings of the flesh? Why does that make us “deserving of wrath” (vs. 3)?

Romans 3:10b-23 (NIV)

¹⁰...“There is no one righteous, not even one;

¹¹there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

¹²All have turned away,

they have together become worthless;

there is no one who does good,
not even one.”

¹³“Their throats are open graves;
their tongues practice deceit.”

“The poison of vipers is on their lips.”

¹⁴“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”

¹⁵“Their feet are swift to shed blood;

¹⁶ruin and misery mark their ways,

¹⁷and the way of peace they do not know.”

¹⁸“There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. ²⁰Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin.

²¹But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²²This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew and Gentile, ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

? Paul utilizes strong imagery found in the Old Testament in this passage to evoke a response in his audience. How does his description of our unrighteousness make you feel? What images in particular land with you?

? Why are we tempted to compare the severity of our sin with others’? How is this challenged by what we just read?

? Which portions of this passage do you struggle to actually believe? What does it look like to have a healthy understanding of and attitude towards our own sins?

“God regards the human race as an organic whole, a unity, represented by Adam as its head. And God also thinks of the new race of Christians, those who are redeemed by Christ, as an organic whole, a unity represented by Christ as head of his people.”
--Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Pgs. 495-496

? How do we fight against sin and temptation? What should be our response as we come to understand our total depravity?

? Do you have a preferred way of confessing sin to God? What does it look like? What impact does confession have on you?

The untamed God gives undeserved mercy to unresponsive sinners.
-Proof: *Finding Freedom through the Intoxicating Joy of Irresistible Grace*,
Montgomery & Jones

Ephesians 2:1-5 (NIV)

¹As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, ²in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. ³All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. ⁴But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, ⁵made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.

? What freedom does God give you now that you live under grace?

? How does viewing Jesus as your only hope change the way you relate to Him, think of Him, worship Him, and love Him?

For Discussion and Accountability

? As Christians we are called to live a life of repentance. How will you spend time this week in reflection and prayer about unconfessed sin in your life?

? What does it look like for you to truly live like someone who is forgiven?