

Radical Depravity (Part 1)

How often do we hear in our culture the adage, “He or she has a good heart”? This attribution of an innate, inherent goodness occurs frequently, and it demonstrates the general, common belief that mankind, despite his clear, unequivocal iniquity, ultimately is good. Contrary to this proposal, the Word of God paints a significantly different picture of the nature of humanity. Jesus declares (drawing from the Old Testament) to the rich young ruler in Matthew 19 that no one is good except for God, and He elaborates on man’s condition by asserting that humanity cannot reverse their position unaided. This lesson on the first doctrine of grace, radical depravity, explains and explores mankind’s sinful, depraved state.

I. Radical Depravity

- a. Sometimes called total depravity
- b. This forms the first part of our focus because we need to understand humanity’s condition before God’s intervention.
- c. Radical depravity means that the entirety of a human being suffers from the plague and death of sin. This curse afflicts all of mankind, and it begins with Adam’s fall and is transferred to his progeny.
- d. The gospel of John provides a striking picture of man’s depravity before God.

II. Man’s Depravity Creates Spiritual Ignorance.

- a. Sin has darkened the mind of every person born into this world (excluding Jesus).
 - i. John 1:1–9: Jesus is the light, yet the world does not know Him.
 1. Despite the fact that no man had ever lived a life of holiness and perfection as Jesus did, the world did not recognize Him as the Son of God.
 2. Even if Jesus appeared amongst humanity today, it would still not acknowledge His deity.
 - b. Recognition of Jesus occurs only through the life-giving activity of God.
 - i. The Lord veils His gospel to natural man (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3–4, etc.).
 - ii. Acceptance of the free call requires a dramatic change of heart engendered by God.

III. Man’s Depravity Creates Spiritual Blindness.

- a. Humanity cannot see the truth of Christ in its depraved condition.
 - i. John 3:3: “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.”
 - ii. This involves ability, not permission
- b. Rebirth and consequent proper sight demands the Holy Spirit’s activity.

IV. Man’s Depravity Creates Enmity toward Jesus Christ.

- a. John 3:19–20: There exists in the heart of man spiritual hatred toward Jesus Christ.
 - i. This hatred results from God’s judgment on sin.
 - ii. The hatred takes the form of both active rebellion and passive indifference.
- b. Depraved man abhors Christ all the more because He fears that the light of Christ will expose his evil practices in the darkness.

V. Man’s Depravity Creates Spiritual Defiance.

- a. All those in a state of spiritual unbelief disobey God.
 - i. John 3:36: the wrath of God abides in the unbeliever.
 - ii. God’s wrath responds to disobedience.
- b. The gospel goes forth as a command, not a request, and the depraved man shuns this command with venom.

VI. Man’s Depravity Creates Spiritual Death.

- a. All those outside of Christ exist in a state of spiritual death (John 5:25; Eph. 2:1; Col. 2:12–13).
 - i. Depraved man does not possess some sickness capable of curing through the use of antidotes.
 - ii. On the contrary, spiritual death reigns over the natural man, and a dead man does not possess any capability other than to rot and stink.
- b. Spiritual resurrection must occur before man might live.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Psalm 14:1–3; John 1:1–18; 3:1–21, 36; 5:24–30; Romans 3:9–20; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4; Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:12–13