

in David's Psalm; however, we should note that the persons about whom the Psalmist is speaking "go astray," they are not born astray. Also, babies are not under consideration in this text (Psalm 58:3, 4-5, 6).[12]

John 6:44-45. These verses are used to teach that one cannot come to God unless the Holy Spirit regenerates him. While it is true that God draws us (John 6:44), the question is HOW? Jesus informs us of this in John 6:45 when he says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." It is the Word of God that draws men when they read or hear it. Men come to God on their own by responding to the Gospel message.

These passages nowhere teach Total Hereditary Depravity; one must force it into the passages.

The Doctrine Defeated

Scripture sheds much light upon the traditions of men. This doctrine, like all other man-made teachings, shrivels when placed beside the perfect law of liberty. There are four answers to this teaching.

The Bible teaches that man CHOOSES to sin. It was God who man made to be upright in the beginning, but man sought after other things (Ecclesiastes 7:29). Man became lost because he CHOSE to sin (Ezekiel 28:15). Romans 3:12 says the world went out of the way, not that they were born in the evil way. John explains that sin is the transgression of the law, which implies a choice (1 John 3:4).

The Bible teaches that man does not inherit sin. Whitside observed that it is impossible to inherit an act. To be consistent with their title, advocates must teach that humans inherited only ONE sin of Adam, the sin he committed.[13] Of course, all people sin in a variety of ways. Ezekiel was plain when he exclaimed that the soul that sins would die, and that one does not bear the iniquity of his father (Ezekiel 18:20). Paul explains that each person will be responsible for himself in the judgement (Romans 14:12).

The Bible teaches that babies are born sinless. There are three different possibilities of a man's spiritual state: (1) Safe, (2) Saved, or (3) Lost. Babies and those mentally impaired, are safe. Contrary to

Calvinistic teaching, little children have no mental capacity to determine the difference between right or wrong (Deuteronomy 1:39). The Lord's teaching makes absolutely no sense if Calvin were correct, for why would anyone want to be converted to a totally depraved sinner (Matthew 18:1-3)?!

The Bible teaches that man MUST choose to seek after God to be saved. Calvinism puts the responsibility on God and teaches that regeneration precedes faith.[14] Calvinism says, "God chooses you," but Scripture says, "therefore choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:19). Paul did not tell the idolaters on Mars Hill to wait for a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but rather to "seek the Lord" (Acts 17:29). He also told the church at Philippi to "work out your own salvation" (Philippians 2:12). The Holy Spirit NEVER operated upon the heart of a sinner to save him. The new birth in John 3:3, 5 is not talking about a direct operation of the Holy Spirit. Instead, the reception of the Gospel and baptism are required in order to be born again.

Total Hereditary Depravity is a doctrine not taught in the Bible. Beware dear ones!

Endnotes

- [1]humblechurchofchrist.com/Lessons/PDF%20Files/Calvinism.pdf
- [2]Augustine, *City of God*, Book 13, Chapter 14
- [3]Augustine, *Augustine's Confessions Book 1 Ch 7*
- [4]<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/tulip-and-reformed-theology-total-depravity>
- [5]Ibid.
- [6]<https://www.padfield.com/acrobat/taylor/calvinism.pdf>
- [7]<https://youtu.be/PFT6SWW8uH0?si=ULe3KPMWLNamLmj4>
- [8]<https://www.padfield.com/acrobat/taylor/calvinism.pdf>
- [9]Tom Wacaster, *Studies in Romans*, p. 202.
- [10]<https://www.gty.org/library/sermons-library/80-353/the-believers-confession-of-sin>.
- [11]Tom Wacaster, *Songs and Devotions of David*, Volume III, p. 39-40.
- [12]Arguments come from Gene Taylor:
<https://www.padfield.com/acrobat/taylor/calvinism.pdf>
- [13]Robertson L. Whitside *Doctrinal Discourses*, p. 125.
- [14]<https://redeeminggod.com/calvinists-believe-that-regeneration-precedes-faith/>

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TULIP: An Ugly Flower

A Study on Calvinism (Part 1)



**Noah
Olson**

WORDS WRITTEN
ON THE HEART

Proverbs 3:3

Total Depravity

Noah Olson

Scripture speaks of the necessity of holding to the truth of the Gospel (Galatians 1:6-9; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). There were many false prophets in the first century world (1 John 4:1) and there are many today. One of these false prophets has become an influence in the religious world and that is Calvinism. While specific tenants of Calvinism did not begin with John Calvin, he truly began to spread his doctrines far and wide, influencing many different denominations in the religious world. His teachings can be summarized with the word TULIP as an acrostic.

- Total Depravity
- Unconditional Election
- Limited Atonement
- Irresistible Grace
- Preservation of the Saints

Concerning these tenants, Edwin Palmer noted that “All of these five points (of Calvinism) really hang together or fall together. If one is true, then the others are true. If one is false, then the others are false too.” Since Calvinism is such an influential teaching in the world of religion, we want to examine its tenants and see “what saith the Scripture.” Here we look at the first one: Total Depravity.

The Doctrine Defined

This doctrine is the foundation for the rest of Calvin’s tenants and without it, the rest of his teachings cannot be true. It is often called Total Hereditary Depravity.

- *Total*. This indicates the totality of the person. One said, “his thinking, his emotions, and his will”[1] are infected with sin.
- *Hereditary*. Hereditary means transmitted. Calvin teaches that children inherit a sinful nature.
- *Depravity*. Simply, it means lost.

Total Hereditary Depravity actually did not begin with Calvin. Centuries prior, Augustine wrote, “For God (the Creator of nature, and not of vice) made man upright

who being willingly depraved and justly condemned, begot all his off- spring under the same depravation and condemnation.”[2] He would also write, “For in thy sight there is none free from sin, not even the infant who has lived but a day upon this earth.”[3] It was not until years later that Calvin was a proponent of this teaching. After his death, the Synod of Dort (1618-1619) published various articles concerning this teaching, stating “Man after the fall began children in his own likeness...have derived corruption from their original parent...but by the propagation of a vicious nature...Therefore all men are conceived in sin...and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God.” In summary, we learn two things this doctrine teaches:

Children are born sinners. From existence, each person inherits a sinful nature. They are servants of Satan and are bound to his ways (John 8:44; 2 Timothy 2:25-26). Because of this, some preachers have called babies “vipers in diapers.” R.C. Sproul said, “the doctrine of original sin defines the consequences to the human race because of that first sin.”[4] He would further note that “The idea is that we are not sinners because we sin, but that we sin because we are sinners.”[5] John Wesley himself wrote that, “We are condemned before we have done good or evil, under the curse before we know what it is.”[6] Total Hereditary Depravity teaches that a baby from the womb is no better than a murderer, thief, or drunkard.

One is incapable of coming to God himself.

Influential Reformed teacher John MacArthur wrote, “you couldn’t possibly come on your own, you are not willing or able. You’re dead, you’re dead. Listen, you’re not gonna find a text in which Jesus defends the ability of sinners. You’re not going to find those texts anywhere, where he defends the freedom of their wills. Jesus is no Arminian.”[7] Advocates of this teaching believe that since one is so wholly depraved, it is impossible to come to God himself. He must be drawn by the Holy Spirit first (Ezekiel 36:26; John 6:64-65). It teaches that man cannot save himself, and that salvation relies fully upon the work of the Holy Spirit.

Total Hereditary Depravity then can be summed up in three points: (1) Man is wholly sinful from birth, (2) Man inherits sin, and (3) Man is incapable of coming to God.

The Doctrine “Defended”

As with every false doctrine, many Bible verses are used to “prove” the specific teaching. What are some of the verses used to teach this doctrine?

Romans 5:12. This verse is used as a “proof” text for inherited sin from the first man, Adam. Two points; however, disprove their argument.

- Note that the verse says that “all have sinned.” This implies, as one said, a choice.
- “It was the sentence of ‘death’ not sin, which spread to all men.”[8]

Tom Wacaster refuted the doctrine in just a few words when he said, “the inescapable conclusion is that Adam only introduced sin into the world and his descendants merely participated in the same. They were not guilty of his sin; they only had the opportunity to sin themselves because sin had now been introduced to them. Each man had to make the choice as to whether he would or would not sin.”[9]

Genesis 6:5. Advocates use this verse to “prove” that man’s heart is destined to do wickedness and is born in sin. However: (1) Genesis 6:12 says they “had corrupted,” not were born into corruption as one said. (2) There is nothing in the text that says they were born into sin.

Psalms 51:5. About this verse, John MacArthur said “that from conception, he was a sinner...This is a full admission you’re born a sinner, that you have congenital depravity.”[10] Contrasted to what John MacArthur says,

- David never says that he was the one with iniquity.
- The verse either means his mother was in sin or perhaps the world in which he was born into was sinful.
- Gus Nichols illustrated it perfectly: “If I were to say, ‘Behold I was brought forth in a cucumber patch, and in the field did my mother conceive me,’ it does not mean that he was, therefore, a cucumber.”[11]

Psalms 58:3. Some believe this doctrine is found