

CALVINISM (2)

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY

Introduction

- 1) **Calvinism** is a theological system of interconnected doctrines which emphasizes divine sovereignty and predestination and denies the free will of man to yield to God's will
- 2) Five points of Calvinism (TULIP): **T**otal Hereditary Depravity, **U**nconditional Election, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, **P**erseverance of the Saints
- 3) This lesson will examine ***Total Hereditary Depravity*** in the light of Biblical teaching

I) **The Doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity Defined**

- A) "Our first parents by this sin fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them, whereby death came upon all, all becoming dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of the souls and body. The guilt of sin was imputed (and corrupt nature conveyed) to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin..." (*Philadelphia Confession of Faith*)
- B) "Original sin. This includes both guilt and pollution. The guilt of Adam's sin is imputed to us. Because he sinned as our representative, we are guilty in him. Moreover, we also inherit his pollution, and now have a positive disposition toward sin. Man is by nature totally depraved" (Louis Berkhof, *Summary of Christian Doctrine*, 76)
- C) "Total depravity means that natural man is never able to do any good that is fundamentally pleasing to God, and, in fact does evil all the time... Total inability of man to do, understand, or even desire the good" (Edwin H. Palmer, *The Five Points of Calvinism*, 13, 14)
- D) "The term total depravity, as distinguished from utter depravity, refers to the effect of sin and corruption on the whole person. To be totally depraved is to suffer from corruption that pervades the whole person. Sin affects every aspect of our being: the body, the soul, the mind, the will, and so forth. The total or whole person is corrupted by sin" (R. C. Sproul, *What is Reformed Theology?*, 119-120)

II) **Examining Bible Texts Used to Support Total Hereditary Depravity**

- A) **Genesis 6:5** – "*every intent of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually*"
 - 1) NOT because of original sin, but "all flesh had corrupted *their way* on the earth" (v. 12)
 - 2) Noah "walked with God" – had not corrupted his way; found grace in God's eyes (vv. 8-9)
- B) **Exodus 20:5** – "*visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children...*"
 - 1) NOT the passing on to future generations the inherited spiritual guilt of Adam's sin but the consequences of sin to future generations (i.e. abuse, addiction, laziness, etc.)
- C) **Psalms 51:5** – "*I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me*"
 - 1) NOT say he was born a corrupt sinner guilty of the original sin of Adam
 - 2) Poetic language can employ hyperbole/exaggeration; he was born into a world of sin to parents who were sinners themselves, and he had chosen to sin and confessed it (vv. 3-4)
- D) **Psalms 58:3** – "*The wicked are estranged from the womb*"
 - 1) NOT say they are babies born corrupted by inherited sin
 - 2) Poetic expression of their disposition to sinfulness – "*go astray* as soon as they are born"
- E) **Romans 3:10** – "*There is none righteous, no, not one*"
 - 1) NOT due to inherited sin, but because "they have all gone out of the way" (v. 12; Eccl. 7:29)

- F) **Romans 5:12, 19** – *“through one man sin entered the world...many were made sinners”*
 - 1) Sin was introduced into the world by Adam, but spiritual death “spread to all men *because all sinned*” – each person dies spiritually because of his own sins, not Adam’s (5:14; 6:23)
 - 2) If v. 19 teaches that all inherited sin, it must also teach that all will be saved through Christ!
- G) **1 Corinthians 15:22** – *“For as in Adam all die”*
 - 1) NOT speaking about spiritual death, but physical death, a consequence of Adam’s sin
- H) **Ephesians 2:3** – *“...were by nature children of wrath...”*
 - 1) NOT saying we were “by nature” totally depraved in heart by inherited sin from Adam
 - 2) Their “nature” was a disobedient “walk” and lustful “conduct” of the flesh (vv. 2-3)

III) Bible Teaching that Refutes Total Hereditary Depravity

- A) **Exodus 32:33** – *“Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book”*
 - 1) It is those who sin, not those born in sin, whose names are removed from God’s Book
- B) **Isaiah 59:1-2** – *“Your iniquities have separated you from your God”*
 - 1) Their own sins (vv. 3-8), not someone else’s, separated them from God (cf. 1 Jn. 3:4)
- C) **Ezekiel 18:20** – *“The son shall not bear the guilt of the father...”*
 - 1) Father/son not bear guilt of the other; “the soul who sins shall die”
- D) **Matthew 18:3** – *“Unless you are converted and become like little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven”*
 - 1) Why are saved people to become like little children if such children are depraved in sin?
- E) **Luke 8:15** – *“...having heard the word with a noble and good heart”*
 - 1) An unsaved person can have a good heart that will seek and obey the truth (cf. Acts 10:1-2)
 - 2) Man is not passive, but called to make active choices and be obedient in his salvation (Isa. 1:19-20; Matt. 11:28-29; Acts 2:38, 40; 17:30)

IV) Other Doctrines of Men Revealed to Be False

- A) **Infant Baptism** – done to remove inherited depravity and change the destiny from hell to heaven
 - 1) Baptism was by immersion [burial] and for penitent believers, never infants (Acts 8:6, 12)
- B) **Immaculate Conception** – Roman Catholic doctrine that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was, by the grace of God, preserved free [immaculate] from original sin in her conception
 - 1) Mary was born, like all mankind, pure and innocent in God’s sight; when she sinned, she came under the threat of the wrath of God and in need of the grace and forgiveness in Christ

Conclusion

Total hereditary depravity is the doctrine that the other points of Calvinism are built upon. Remove this foundation of original sin and the Calvinistic doctrine will begin to collapse, as will be evident as we examine the other points of Calvinism in the light of Bible doctrine. Let us not be deceived by the doctrines of men, but humbly hear and respond to the free and gracious invitation of God (Rev. 22:17).