



Hope for the Hopelessly Depraved

Kurt von Schleicher

You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. —John 8:32

Have you ever been told by a teacher in school that people are basically “good” even though they do evil things to each other? I have. Have you ever heard anyone speak of total depravity before? I remember feeling lost when they did. Have you ever enjoyed a destructive habit before and you assured your friends that you could easily quit at any time... but in reality you found that you could never muster enough “*want to*” together to really pull off quitting permanently?

In the '70s I enjoyed partying like there was no tomorrow. And I had fun drinking until I was drunk as a punk with a smelly skunk... yes, for a season until I started reaping the consequences. I don't know about you, but I found it hard to take life sober without the peace of Christ.

The intensity of seriousness in almost everything ...the mundane everydayness...the drudgery of boring routine, it all just seemed way too HEAVY to deal with—yup, a major downer. I was into enjoying life with a lust for excitement with mirth, and levity. I figured that life should be a good time ..where people laugh a lot and experience love, joy and peace instead of always focusing on the issues and hang-ups of others. You see, I grew up in a cold religious church where there was some talkin'. And some of the traditional pastors there had their own drinking, anger and perversion problems. Some were kindhearted and humble, but others were hyper-stern and mean. Some seemed like they actually took pleasure in looking down their noses at young people ..or putting a guilt-trip on me and my friends. God forbid... even though we were guilty with a capital “G”.

*Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin
and nature's night. Thine eye diffused a
quickenning ray, I woke—the dungeon flamed
with light! My chains fell off, my heart was
free; I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*

—Charles Wesley

Inside and outside the church I started having authority challenges in the '70s. Ever had an old man try to hit on you, thinking you were some kind of "hottie" at age eight? Hey, I'm just a kid! Well, I have (it certainly was not at my home thank God!) and it ticked me off so much that I felt like slugging the guy in the teeth until he had none left. I know that's bad English, but it's also exactly the way I felt. I basically told him to keep some major distance between me and him—you know, "*Walk south until you're hat floats!*" Well, I was near the Salton Sea at the time and had no good well-wishing in my head. Man, I was just trying to mind my own business and it doesn't get creepier than that! I heard that other kids my age were approached in the same manner, so we steered way clear of this guy from then on.

Doesn't it seem like our society is hitting the gas peddle; totally accelerating towards criminal perversion and also in protecting the pervs today? Well, it came to a point for me where I just felt like rebelling against all authority figures. I didn't trust them anymore. I'm not proud of disrespecting people—I mean the decent leaders. I'm ashamed of all the fights I started and bad stuff—you know, the sins that hurt God. I can't really blame anyone else for all my bad decisions and the trouble I got into, but other people's sins bothered me a lot more than my own back then. Hey, they should be the ones worried about frying in the devil's smoke house. Not me!

Don't get me wrong, I wanted to love God and people, but on my own terms you see.. rather than on my church leader's terms. Through my inner revolt during this age of hippiefied-anarchy, I voluntarily got very "bound" pretty quickly not even realizing that would be the result of my malevolent activities. And it kind of scared me sometimes too, when I would watch myself gladly sin, doing things that I had promised myself earlier I would never do. My life was basically out of control and much less fun ..more often than ever before when I was younger. I observed myself becoming someone I never wanted to be! And by the tail end of the '70s I started longing for real "deliverance" from my caustic lifestyle ...but not from my wicked friends. Hey, they were the only friends I had... yet I found myself unable to shake off the shackles and chains of once beloved and acceptable habits turned incredibly ugly and menacing ...due to their ongoing negative influence. Did I connect the points? Not yet.

Though I am unlike the intelligent theologian Mister Augustine (AD 354–430), I can certainly relate to what he went through! In his youth, he also spent years living a depraved life of rebellion, filled with worthless excess and self indulgence. Here's how he described it, "*I was bound by the iron chain of my own will. I was rather an unwilling sufferer than a willing actor. And yet it was through me that habit had become an armed enemy against me, because I had willingly come to be what I unwillingly found myself to be.*"

*Out of my bondage, sorrow, and
night, Jesus, I come, Jesus, I
come; into Thy freedom, gladness,
and light, Jesus, I come to Thee.*
—Sleeper

Maybe you too have lived with similar struggles and you wonder what you could do about them. Do you reverence Christ in all you do today? What do you admire most? Do you suppose you could humble yourself and admit that you're a sinner? That sounds so "preachery" huh? It's not a bad question.

The paycheck for sin is death and nonstop painful destruction; do you really want that? Paul said, **“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”** (Rom. 3:23-24). He exclaimed, **“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom. 6:23, nlt). Face it; the consequences for blowing it are beyond gnarly! Are you ready for God to step in and help you?

Man, I feel like I can identify with how Paul felt when he said, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”** (1 Tim. 1:15). But I never intended to stay stuck in the muck. Perhaps you haven't either... that is if you're lacking a death-wish. Hopefully you are! I called out to Christ. I basically hung a 180—I turned in faith to the Bible Jesus and was completely manumitted. I'm no one special. Lots of people have that kind of a story... 'cause it really can happen! Today I'm totally satisfied and clean, and it's all His fault, not mine. I was helpless to scrub up and fix all that was broke and trashed! He reached down grabbed hold of me and washed my filthy angry mind. It was wonderful on so many levels—still is! So why shouldn't I brag out loud about Him? He is a good God that cares for us all. And He has met every personal need just like He promised to do. And now I feel like showing the same mercy to those who have sinned against me. I even want to witness to porn-pervs and pedophiles.

Yes, sinless Jesus alone—who is a pure and holy God—can break the strong fetters of your pet-sins right off of you ...no matter how serious and destructive they are! He's the One who can remove that monkey from your back!

Free, FREE, F-R-E-E!—it's so wonderful to experience a clear conscience and God's peace. Ask Him to grant you true repentance inside and His forgiveness! Why wait? [Receive Him](#) as your Savior by grace through faith, and **“the truth shall make you free”** (Jn. 8:32).

There is a direct correlation between a person's inability to get a grasp upon the grace of a giving God, and their own stiff-necked insistence in clinging to the sinfulness of sin ...that only takes from them and in the end will cost them everything. —kVs

Please understand that true freedom is not found anywhere in the world of hedonistic depravity! It's not found in mere education, nor in being religious... nor in sexual pleasure, nor in self-improvement, nor in eastern meditation, or even in financial independence. It's found in a personal relationship with Christ alone!

Jesus Christ once told some religious leaders who professed that they loved God even though they unwittingly were stuck in deep depraved: **“I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you...”**

And why did they lack such love and authenticity? Jesus told them why: **“I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive Me not”** (Jn. 5:42-43). How can anyone love the Father when they love their sin more and receive not the Son—Jesus Christ for, **“as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God”** (Jn 1:12-13)? I've found that when a person rejects Christ, they become very vulnerable to any strange or cultic belief system that comes down the pike.

But awareness of our own depravity is a wonderful gift! I like what John Newton called it— *“the root of perpetual tenderness.”* Some are so afraid that if they become a Christian, they’ll become flakey or goofy...that God will take all the fun away. But the truth is He only wants to remove the sinful stuff that would destroy you. God in His protective love, showed huge mercy towards us, and now we can too. Who wants to be religious or like that ungrateful servant in Matthew 18 when we have the option of becoming like Christ in his character—becoming gracious, real and forgiving in our hearts?

Here’s what happens when a child of God sins:

1.) Their personal fellowship with God is severed. When David sinned he said, *“Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer”* (Ps. 32:4). As dark clouds hide the sun’s light for days, so sin comes between the soul of a person and their God ...until they repent. Sin interferes with any human’s best judgment too.

2.) The Joy of salvation is gone. Sinners lose their relish for spiritual things: David confessed, *“My sin is ever before me”* ... *“Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation; and uphold me with Thy free Spirit”* (Ps. 51:3, 12). Sin afflicts the person’s conscience and brings-on the conviction of the Spirit (“godly sorrow”). Yes, full confession, true repentance, making restitution to the injured party—all that should be our quick response (See 2 Cor. 7:8-10). We fail to please our Father (1 Thess. 4:1) and we grieve the Spirit of God (Eph. 4:19) when we break His commandments.

3.) Power for service is lost. Living the life by the power of God’s Word and Spirit—that’s essential for any real witness, but sin decreases our effectiveness in the world! We aren’t shining as bright as we should be. People can fake it if they want, but it will only produce chaff to be burned. David prayed, *“Thou desirest truth in the inward parts”* ..and *“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me”* (Ps. 51:6, 10).

4.) The Christian invites divine chastisement. The Bible says, *“Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth...What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?”* (Heb. 12:6-7). God says, *“I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail”* (Ps. 89:32-33).

5.) There is loss of the saint’s reward in heaven and an inability to participate in some of God’s best blessings here on earth. Out of vertical fellowship means out of service—out of obedient service means out of treasures being laid up in heaven. All earthly wealth will be left behind, so why build for eternity with temporal material, *“wood, hay, and stubble”* which cannot endure God’s flaming test at the Judgment Seat of Christ (See 1 Cor. 3:11-15)? Many will be chagrined when they suffer massive loss. Take the Way back today! David told God, *“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the Lord’ And You forgave”* (Ps. 32:5). The Apostle John said, *“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”* (1 Jn. 1:9).

But how did sin even get here in the first place? Paul tells us how: ***“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned”*** (Rom. 5:12). Sin is so universal. Maybe this is why the term is so frequently ignored. So many are sinning so often that it has become a way of life for them! It has become acceptable and seemingly normal, *“because everyone’s doing it!”* And now wickedness is on the increase.

**“The Bible will keep you from sin,
or sin will keep you from the Bible.”**

—Dwight L. Moody

**“Prayer will make a man cease from sin,
or sin will entice a man to cease from prayer”** —John Bunyan

We hate sin because of all the hurt it causes!

- **Sin hurts the sinner—it certainly hurt David the adulterer.** *It hurt his eyes (Ps. 51:3), his mind (v. 6), his ears (v. 8), his heart (v. 10), his spirit v. 10 and his mouth (vv. 13-15).*
- **Sin often hurts innocent people.** *Think about how many died when David numbered the Israeli army outside the will of God (see 2 Sam. 24:15). Until you and I learn to hate sin as much as Jesus hates it; until you and I love the Father and righteousness to the degree that Jesus loves the Father and His righteousness... guess what.. there's room for growth!*
- **Sin hurts others close to the offender—it's so destructive and doesn't stand still when left unaddressed** *(think about Bathsheba, Uriah, David's baby that died, and Tamar who was raped by Amnon. Think about prideful Absalom who willfully rebelled against authority and about how he died).*
- **Sin hurts God.** *Primarily, our sin is committed against Him. Perhaps you would like to know how much it hurt God. If so, look at the cross of Christ and then you will know.*
- **Sin separates people from people ...and worse yet, from their Maker.**

I done some funerals and I've never met a Christian who said they regretted giving their life to Jesus. But I have met some dying sinners who were filled with regret. Will you have regrets? Let me ask you: What words do you want to hear at the very end of your days? Ever thought about that? Whose eyes do you want to look into most (and not have them look real sad) when it is all said and done?

Do you have brokenness? The Bible says, **“Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days”** (Jam. 5:1-3, nkjv). God says, **“Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine”** (Joel 1:5). Transgressions seem to be on the increase worldwide, but grace is abounding all the more today as the Holy Spirit convicts and saves contrite sinners. I believe that we are living in the last days. If you don't believe this, please know at least that you are living in *your* last days. Life is short. When life for me on this big terrestrial ball is completed, I just want to hear: **“Well done you good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord”** (Matt. 25.21 & 23).

But who on this globe do you think will hear these words... *“Well done thou successful and prosperous one...or rich and powerful one... or famous and lettered one... Enter into the joy of your Lord”*? I don't know of anyone who will hear those words. But there are two aspects of character mentioned that we Christians should be known for: They are 1.) **“good”** and 2.) **“faithful.”** Wouldn't they be better than “popular,” or “commercially well-connected”? Wouldn't they be way better than “wicked” and “sinful”? And those two words “good” and “faithful” really should intrigue you and me, because that is what our Lord Jesus Christ is like: **“He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it”** (1 Thess.

5:24). No evil intent in Him, no lie or deception, no wrong doing ..EVER!—“**God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all**” (1 Jn. 1:5).

Did you know that in a world where we are surrounded by bad and disloyal people, Christ is the One who can express His goodness and faithfulness through you? This type of kindness can literally impact people! These are perilous times. What family hasn't experienced the betrayal or treachery of another person's fickleness, or the searing pain from someone's really bad decisions? There are a lot of people in this hurting world that have been ripped off and burned in different disloyal ways, and they are waiting for what you have to share, Christian. Jesus is the Answer no matter what the question or issue is!

What's so cool is that Jesus Christ links those two character qualities that I've been talking about with the term "**servant**"... which means there is to be selfless obedience and good works done for Another. Servant—that's the only job description given to each and every believer ...regardless of their spiritual gifting, their level of maturity, their position of authority, or of their individual calling.

What about you—do you feel that you are good? It will indeed be, "**good and faithful servants**" who will enter into their Lord's JOY! Are those the qualities that you and I are really going after today...or do we just independently spend our brief time here striving to gather perishable stuff, dusty souvenirs, vain memories ..or maybe what the world labels as *status*?

May I ask you another question? Why should a holy and just God let you into His home? That's a very good question huh. Have you kept God's *Top Ten List*—the Ten Commandments? I certainly haven't, but listen, Heaven will one day be full of people who have not ...and yet they will have been [freely forgiven](#). Sure they will know and have a relationship with the One who is good ...even before their arrival. You must make reservations in advance before it's too late!

When men talk of a little hell, it is because they think they have only a little sin, and believe in a little Saviour; it is all little together. But when you get a great sense of sin, you want a great Saviour, and feel that, if you do not have Him, you will fall into a great destruction, and suffer a great punishment at the hands of this great God.

—C.H. Spurgeon

Hey, if you want to know goodness and gain entrance into Heaven, then get to know Jesus Christ! He is a really good Person. What master passion are you living for right now? Surely you remember how Jesus once addressed that fairly moral young person asking, "**Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. You know the**

commandments: 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not bear false witness,' 'Honor your father and your mother'" (Lk. 18:19-20). Well, the young man told Jesus he had kept all those things, but in reality he lied.

Jesus was basically asking him, are you saying that I am God?—you're openly calling me good. And [Jesus claimed to be God](#) on more than one occasion, so if He wasn't ...He wouldn't be a good person. Was Jesus a sinful liar too? Was he a deranged or deluded street person? Was Jesus really the God He claimed to be? Who do you say He is and how do you describe your own condition before Him?

Depravity or absolute depravity?

There is a difference between *total depravity* and *absolute depravity*. I'm not a Calvinist, but it's true that man is depraved **in every part of his being**. And yet from the time when I was in kindergarten all the way through college, my teachers taught me and my classmates that: "*man is basically good even though he does evil things*"—he just needs more education. But the Bible refutes this teaching. Is that what you believe?

While man is depraved in every part of his being, at the same time there does remain in his being (or in her being) remnants of good. *Absolute depravity* wrongly teaches that every part of man's being is wholly bad. So the difference that I'm talking about leaves room for some good which people are still able to choose to perform. Sure, you and I see unbelievers (religious ones trying to earn God's righteousness and irreligious people simply acting humanely) doing good deeds every day, and some of these people seem to do more good deeds than a few professing Christians we've known.

The result of the fall is total depravity—man was rendered corrupt. The Canons say that man "*became involved in blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity, perverseness of judgment; became wicked, rebellious, obdurate in heart and will and impure in his affection.*" *There was no part of his nature that was not affected by sin. The word "total" must not be taken in the absolute sense as though man is completely depraved. Man is not as bad as he can be. Article 4, which we hope to consider more fully later in this series, speaks of "glimmerings of natural light which remain in man since the fall."* God does restrain the working of sin in the life of man on earth. And sinful man still has a sense of right and wrong. His corruption is total in the sense that there is no part of his being that is pure and holy; and the good he does is done for God and for His glory.¹

Total depravity is the fallen state of people as a result of their sin.² Though some Christians believe that man's nature was unaffected by the fall of Adam and Eve, the Bible teaches otherwise. People are by nature not inclined to love God wholly with heart, mind, and strength, as God requires, but rather are all inclined to serve their own personal interests ahead of those of their

neighbors or more importantly, of God's. They reject the rule of Christ. That's why we need to pray for them, so they can experience [the "para" and "en" experience](#) of the Holy Spirit.

Sin must indeed be exceeding sinful, when the Father must need to give His only Son to be the sinner's Friend!

—J.C. Ryle

Yes, even mere religion and philanthropy can be destructive to the extent that these can originate from a human's imagination, passions, and will. Even the good which a person may intend to do can be faulty in

its premise, false in its motive and weak in its implementation; and there is no mere refinement of their natural capacities that can correct this condition. Thus, even acts of generosity and altruism can be totally egoistic acts in disguise.

But as the Holy Spirit works in a person's life to convict, (no matter who they are) that person can be made capable of choosing God. You see, God loves you deeply and is

The church has to rediscover two things! One, the majestic holiness of God, and the other—the sinfulness of sin.
—Leonard Ravenhill

not willing that anyone should perish. *"Whosoever will"* can be saved! God absolutely *does* want every human to come to Him in repentance and faith—they each must choose to [be born again](#) and of course they will be accepted in His Kingdom when they do. They will discover that they've been chosen from before the foundations of the world. Anyone can choose to turn from a life of sin to Christ, be regenerated in their human spirit by the Holy Spirit of God—yes, be made totally alive. And then God expects that person to act like it—do good works meet for repentance (that verify it) and glorify the Father.

Here Is What Total Depravity Does Not Mean:

1. It doesn't mean that people do not know right from wrong. We each have a conscience. But what about salvation and the uneducated Pigmy in New Guinea; will he be judged harshly as a depraved law breaker? Jesus said, ***"But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"*** (Lk. 12:48). He who has the law, will be judged by the law, he who has not the law will be judged without the law. When we run into things we don't really know, then we each need to fall back on what we do know—God is just and fair (See Rom. 1). We have the light of creation, the light of the law, the light of conscience and the light of Christ. I've found that if we (any of us in the Western world or in New Guinea) respond to the light we've received, God then gives more light. And respectively we each are accountable for the light we've already received.

2. It doesn't mean that we each are as evil as we could be. The Bible talks about sinners getting worse in Romans 1, so unfortunately there is that potential for us, as well. The Word talks about a just God who will address our sin issues. It tells us of potential crowns for us to gain in Christ and varying levels of reward in His Heaven along with varying degrees of punishment in Hell for the wicked and the very wicked). By total depravity, I do not mean that men are as bad as they can be, or as they might be, under other circumstances. If they were placed under circumstances of less restraint, or of greater temptation, they would doubtless be worse than they are. When we say that men are totally depraved, we are sometimes understood to affirm, that men are as bad as they can be. They seem to understand the word total, as signifying the highest possible degree of depravity. But certainly this is not the meaning of the word total. The sum total of 3 and 2 and 5 is 10. This is not the highest possible number, but is the total of 3. and 2. and 5. The same word when qualifying depravity does not mean the highest possible degree of depravity, but simply, that the whole character is depraved; that there is no mixture of good in his character. The sinner often does not say or do as wickedly as they could say and do; but the Bible teaches, ***"That every thought and imagination of his heart, is only evil continually"*** (Gen. 6:5).

3. It doesn't mean that a person commits every kind of sin. Some sins cancel out other sins (a hoarder keeps a person from spending too much. Someone with pride often refrains from doing certain sins so they won't get caught and look bad, especially when they want to continue to appear better than others morally).

4. It doesn't mean that a person has no good deeds at all ever. Many sinners do good and charitable works. Many criminals on death row and even members of the Mafia love and show affection to their moms. But their personality (which is made up of their thinking processes, will and emotions—like any dog has) is just whacked.

5. It doesn't mean that a person lacks the ability or faculties to obey God. You and I have all the powers of moral agency available to us; that are needed to render perfect obedience to our heavenly Father. If there was any lack of faculties, in our nature, our vertical responsibility would cease and we could not be justly culpable or blamed for wrongdoing.

6. It doesn't mean that a person has any type of physical pollution in them that has been biologically transmitted from Adam or Eve, or from any of their other ancestors into our bodies. It is absolutely impossible that moral depravity would consist in the form of physical pollution. Some persons have spoken of depravity, and of the pollutions of our nature, as if there were some moral depravity cleaving to, or incorporated with, the very substance of a person's being. That's nonsense. If such a depravity were possible, it would not be moral, but physical depravity. It could not be a depravity for which we were blame-worthy. It could not be a sinful depravity. It would be a disease, and not a crime.

In At Least Four Senses Is Man's Depravity Total:

1.) Our rebellion against God is total.

Apart from the grace of God there is no delight in the holiness of God, and there is no glad submission to the sovereign authority of God. Of course totally depraved men can be very religious and very philanthropic. They can pray and give alms and fast, as Jesus said (Matthew 6:1-18). But their very religion is rebellion against the rights of their Creator, if it does not come from a childlike heart of trust in the free grace of God. Religion is one of the chief ways that man conceals his unwillingness to forsake self-reliance and bank all his hopes on the unmerited mercy of God (Luke 18:9-14; Colossians 2:20-23).

The totality of our rebellion is seen in Romans 3:9-10 and 18. "I have already charged that all men, both Jews and Greeks, are under the power of sin, as it is written: None is righteous, no not one; no one seeks for God....There is no fear of God before their eyes."

It is a myth that man in his natural state is genuinely seeking God. Men do seek God. But they do not seek him for who he is. They seek him in a pinch as one who might preserve them from death or enhance their worldly enjoyments. Apart from conversion, no one comes to the light of God.

Some do come to the light. But listen to what John 3:20-21 says about them. "Every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light, that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been wrought in God."

Yes there are those who come to the light -- namely those whose deeds are the work of God. "Wrought in God" means worked by God. Apart from this gracious work of God all men hate the light of God and will not come to him lest their evil be exposed -- this is total rebellion. "No one seeks for God...There is no fear of God before their eyes!"

2.) In his total rebellion everything man does is sin.

In Romans 14:23 Paul says, "Whatever is not from faith is sin." Therefore, if all men are in total rebellion, everything they do is the product of rebellion and cannot be an honor to God, but only part of their sinful rebellion. If a king teaches his subjects how to fight well and then those subjects rebel against their king and use the very skill he taught them to resist him, then even those skills become evil.

Thus man does many things which he can only do because he is created in the image of God and which in the service of God could be praised. But in the service of man's self-justifying rebellion, these very things are sinful.

In Romans 7:18 Paul says, "***I know that no good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.***"

We will have to say that it is good that most unbelievers do not kill and that some unbelievers perform acts of benevolence. What we mean when we call such actions good is that they more or less conform to the external pattern of life that God has commanded in Scripture.

However, such outward conformity to the revealed will of God is not righteousness in relation to God. It is not done out of reliance on him or for his glory. He is not trusted for the resources, though he gives them all. Nor is his honor exalted, even though that's his will in all things (1 Corinthians 10:31). Therefore even these "good" acts are part of our rebellion and are not "good" in the sense that really counts in the end -- in relation to God.

3.) Man's inability to submit to God and do good is total.

Picking up on the term "flesh" above (man apart from the grace of God) we find Paul declaring it to be totally enslaved to rebellion. Romans 8:7-8 says, "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

The "mind of the flesh" is the mind of man apart from the indwelling Spirit of God ("***You are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God really dwells in you,***" Romans 8:9). So natural man has a mindset that does not and cannot submit to God. Man cannot reform himself.

Ephesians 2:1 says that we Christians were all once "dead in trespasses and sins." The point of deadness is that we were incapable of any life with God. Our hearts were like a stone toward God (Ephesians 4:18; Ezekiel 36:26). Our hearts were blind and incapable of seeing the glory of God in Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). We were totally unable to reform ourselves.

4.) Our wrong independent waywardness is totally deserving of eternal punishment.

Ephesians 2:3 goes on to say that in our deadness we were "children of wrath." That is, we were under God's wrath because of the corruption of our hearts that made us as good as dead before God.

The reality of hell is God's clear indictment of the infiniteness of our guilt. If our corruption were not deserving of an eternal punishment God would be unjust to threaten us with a punishment so severe as eternal torment. But the Scriptures teach that God is just in condemning unbelievers to eternal hell (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9; Matthew 5:29f; 10:28; 13:49f; 18:8f; 25:46; Revelation 14:9-11; 20:10). Therefore, to the extent that hell is a total sentence of condemnation, to that extent must we think of ourselves as totally blameworthy apart from the saving grace of God.

In summary, total depravity means that our rebellion against God is total, everything we do in this rebellion is sin, our inability to submit to God or reform ourselves is total, and we are therefore totally deserving of eternal punishment.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of admitting our condition to be this bad. If we think of ourselves as basically good or even less than totally at odds with God, our grasp of the work of God in redemption will be defective. But if we humble ourselves under this terrible truth of our total depravity, we will be in a position to see and appreciate the glory and wonder of the work of God discussed in the next four points.³

Here Is What Total Depravity Does Mean:

1. It means that every part of a person has been touched by sin.

2. It also means that all humans have been affected in a negative way their wrong choices. But they each can, in the short-term (today), turn to Christ for His forgiveness and strength to become a new creature—an overcomer. You are either going to become an overcomer in Christ, or be overcome by sin.

3. Depravity means that every person has a tendency; a propensity to do evil—to sin. Come on, you know how the first word of most Children is something like, “Mine!”). Paul said that when he I wanted to do good, evil was present with him.

4. It means that all of us have an aversion to God. Think about it. What did Adam and Eve do after they sinned? They hid themselves from Him ..and went after the fig leaves to cover up, but when confronted by God, they had a choice to make... just like each of us have.

5. It means that by yourself, you have no capacity in you to please God. All your righteousness is as filthy rags and I won't go into how filthy the original language describes this. Without faith (that comes from God), it is impossible to please God. It was to Christians that God said, **“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure”** (Phil 2:12-13). We don't work for salvation, we work from it. We don't fight from salvation, we fight from it ...with spiritual weapons instead of carnal ones.

You can have hope in the Lord! God can do extraordinary things through ordinary people. God may never call you to be a pastor or a teacher or a missionary, per se. But it is clear that He is looking for a repentant sinner that is fully surrendered to Him to show Himself **“strong on behalf of”** ...yes, if you'll just forsake your sin and give your life away to Him.

Think of all the ordinary sinners that God has used in the past to turn the world upside down. Consider how utterly unqualified so many of them were. We can anticipate wonderful things—great EXPLOITS—in Christ!

*Noah got **DRUNK**.*

*Abraham tried to **DECIEVE**.*

*Jacob was a **LIAR**.*

*Gideon was **AFRAID**.*

*Rahab was a **PROSTITUTE**.*

*David had an **AFFAIR**.*

*Moses was a **MURDERER**.*

*Elijah was **SUICIDAL** at one point.*

*Jonah **RAN FROM GOD**.*

*Peter **DENIED CHRIST**.*

*The Disciples **FELL ASLEEP** while praying.*

*The Samaritan Woman was **DIVORCED** more than once.*

So what's your excuse? Why, pray tell, could He not use you mightily? I am sure that He can! Are you willing? If you'll draw close to Him in faith, He'll draw close to you!

All this is certainly not to condone any of the wrong-doing's these people did of course, but it is to say that God can and did use all of them in different ways! He loves us all the same and wants us to approach Him on His terms so we can enjoy the same privileges

in righteousness that they enjoyed. I an undeserving sinner ***“Thank God for his Son—a gift too wonderful for words!”*** (2 Cor. 9:15, nlt).

Why don't you just pray something like *"Lord, here I am, send me!"* God really takes us up on prayers like that.

¹ This quote is from "The Banner" in an article which is explaining the Canons of Dort, especially the Canons III & IV, Article 4.

² Here are some verses that support the doctrine of total depravity (from the ESV Bible except where noted):

- Genesis 6:5: "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."
- Psalms 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."
- Ecclesiastes 7:20: "Surely there is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins."
- Ecclesiastes 9:3: "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."
- Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"
- Jeremiah 13:23: (niv): "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil."
- Mark 7:21-23: "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."
- John 3:19: "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil."
- John 6:44: "[Jesus said,] '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 6:64-65: "[Jesus said,] 'But there are some of you who do not believe.' (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 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 8:34: "Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.'"
- Romans 3:10-11: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God."
- God says (in Jer. 17:9-10), "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings".
- The Psalmist David said (in Ps. 51:1, kjv), "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest. Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."
- You remember (Lk. 18:13, kjv), "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner".
- Paul said, "Oh, wretched man that I am. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Ps. 51:4-5, kjv).
- Romans 8:7-8: "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."
- 1 Corinthians 2:14: "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."
- Ephesians 2:1-3: "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."
- Titus 3:3: "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." (Please do read all these verses in their own context).

³ I have John Piper to thank for these four senses (above). I am grateful to him. He is the pastor at the Bethlehem Baptist Church.