

****READ THE TEXT****

INTRO-

Introductory Illustration

- **In 350 AD, there was a British monk by the name of Pelagius** who asserted that “human beings can indeed simply choose to obey God all of the time and never sin willfully and guiltily” (Olson, 268).
 - Clearly, one writer notes, “Pelagius did affirm that a Christian person can be *without sin* if he or she wishes” (ibid., 270).
 - But this is the question this morning, “*Is there anyone who is fundamentally ‘good’?*” If **so**, then a person can initiate relationship with God and can have a part to play in his/her salvation. If **not**, however, then God is the one who *must* save us and come to us and initiate all reconciliation with us because we are ‘*dead in sin*’ (Rom 5:12).
 - **But clearly, as we will see, this line of thinking that someone is ‘innately and inherently good’ goes against every grain of Scripture**—without a doubt—as we’ll see today.
- Therefore, for *someone* or *anyone* to be saved, he must be “**unsaved**” before he can be “**saved**”. That means he must understand *his own sinfulness* and His need for the Savior before he can accept and believe upon the Savior!
- **David** wrote this psalm & that’s all we know. We have no idea as to the occasion, the purpose, or the background of the psalm.
- **Setting:** Psalm 14 has a duplicate in Book II of the psalter (Ps 53) and “the double occurrence of the psalm, together with the titles of Pss 14 and 53, indicate that over the course of time both psalms became used frequently in Israel’s worship” (Craigie, 146).
 - Amazingly, when God says something once, **Listen up!** When God says something twice, **Listen up with the keenest attention!** But if God says it **three** times (as is the case here), “**Read, Mark, Learn, and Inwardly Digest!**” (Book of Common Prayer).
- **THEOLOGY -- Anthropology**
 - **Total depravity/total inability** (or moral inability): This doctrine teaches us that fallen man is unable to love, obey, or please God.
 - Total depravity means “radical corruption”.
 - The core of our being is *radically* and *unchangeably* infected by sin.
 - This permeates our hearts, our minds, our wills, our desires, and our actions.
 - **We are therefore dead even though we live.**
 - Radical corruption, thus, means that “sin has pervaded every part of our physical, mental, emotional (and of course spiritual) makeup so that there is NOTHING about us that remains untouched by sin (James Boice).
 - We are not totally depraved, struck with total inability or radically corrupt **because we have sinned**. We are all those things because *our hearts are fundamentally SINFUL & thus hostile to God*.

- Like a corrupt tree brings forth corrupt fruit, *so* the corrupt sin in your life **BEGINS** with a corrupt heart/nature.
- There is no ‘island of righteousness’ in your being.

Ephesians 4:17-19 ¹⁷ So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, ¹⁸ being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; ¹⁹ and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.

Here we have the **mind**, the **understanding**, the **ignorance**, the **willful hardness**, their **ongoing pursuit of sin**, and **evil actions**. = this is radical corruption!

Why is the doctrine of radical depravity so essential & necessary?

I. **BECAUSE IT REVEALS THE RADICAL DEPRAVITY OF MEN!** (1-6)

This is the divine description of the depraved man!

11 descriptive phrases of the depravity of men...

1. Foolish hearts (1a)

- i. Note how the psalm begins with a fool saying *in his heart*.
 1. The **wicked** man-refers to “one who is senseless, foolish.” But it doesn’t refer to one who *cannot intellectually* know God—for **none** of us can do that! ☺
 2. Rather, it “expresses shame or disgust or contempt towards God.”
 - a. **SIN, IS SELF-LOVE WITHOUT GOD** (Jonathan Edwards).
 3. I wrote a paper in *seminary on “the fool in Proverbs”* and I defined this person as a “*prideful and ignoble boor.*”
 - a. *This is the one whose “life is lived without the direction or acknowledgement of God. This is the one who has NO lovingkindness ... he lives as if there were no covenant with God—and if there were NO God!”*
 - b. Additionally, this *nabal* (fool) is one who “sinfully boasts in his independence from God and His Commandments”
 - c. This fool is not “ignorant”---he consciously chooses to *live as if God didn’t exist (or hold him accountable).*
 - d. *As Horatio Bonar* (author of “*It is well with my Soul*”) **said**: “*In all unbelief there are 2 things: a good opinion of one’s self and a bad opinion of God*”
- ii. ***Atheism & depravity & folly*** ALL begin in the heart. The root is the heart. The source of sin & the root of rebellion **is the heart**.
- iii. **Prov 23:7** For as he thinketh in his heart, so *is* he:
 1. Now this is not really ‘atheism’ --- as there is no real atheist. But this is a *practical/functional* atheist who lives as if *God didn’t really exist*.
 2. This is the man who “sinfully boasts in his independence from God and His Commandments”

- iv. **NOTE:** everything now flows out of the foolish **HEART**.
2. **Abominable deeds (1b)**
- i. It is a verb. They ‘corrupt *themselves*’. They are spoiled, ruined, marred. It often refers to a pit, destruction, death (even hell).
 - ii. - They do *abominable* deeds.
 1. This is something loathsome, vile, despicable before God’s eyes. It makes God sick to look at. Prostitution is looked at as an **abomination** in the Bible.
 2. To be honest, it means to be “abhorred by” or “hated by” God.
 - iii. Not only are they corrupt themselves but they *corrupt* and infect others!
3. **None good (1c)**
- i. **not even one** — The Another phrase is also added in early translations — “not even one” — *No one is ‘doing’ good*.
 1. **This is the doctrine of total depravity or radical depravity.**
 - a. It is **not** that we are as bad as we could be.
 - b. It is that we are depraved in all aspects of life.
4. **None understand (2a)**
- i. **THE LORD** looks down from heaven (serious overtones of judgment present here!):
 1. Noah’s flood – Gen 6:5
 2. Tower of Babel – Gen 11:5
 3. Sodom & Gomorrah – Gen 18:21
 - ii. This refers to one who prospers because he ‘understands.’ It is one who has intelligent knowledge to prosper, succeed.
5. **None seek (2b)**
- i. There is no one who *seeks God*.
 1. **Think about it:** If God stoops down to look upon the sons of men and God looks for 2 things: one who is wise and one who seeks God, ***ought those to be the driving passions of our lives if we truly desire to be pleasing to God?***
 - a. “*The righteous are characterized by their love for God and adherence to His laws...they love to do the will of God*”
 - b. ****Man does not—and can not—seek God in and of Himself. Man cannot come to God on His own. Rather, man runs away from God!**
 - c. “*We deceive ourselves into thinking that man, on his own, really does **seek God**. Don’t all the religion and rituals and practices from the beginning of time demonstrate that man does indeed **seek God**? Not at all. If man initiates the search then he doesn’t seek the true God, the God of the Bible. Instead he seeks an idol that he makes himself*” (David Guzik).
 2. A man cannot seek God and pursue God any more than an empty vessel can fill itself up with water.
 - a. **Eph 2:1-2, Rom 5:8, 10 = CONCLUSION: God initiates relationship, redemption, and reconciliation—NOT man!**
 - b. *No one finds God by ‘searching for Him’. NO! He is sought after by God and is found by God!*
6. **All rebel (3a)**
- i. All have “turned aside” and all together have become “corrupt”. The 2nd word for “corrupt” means to be corrupt *morally* one’s life, conduct, actions & behavior. This is moral evil.

7. All bad (3b)

- i. So bad is the condition of mankind that there is NOT anyone who does good --- not even one!
 - 1. “*The point of verses 2-3 is that the arrogant man of v.1 is but an example—even though an extreme one—of mankind in general*”

8. Hate godliness (4a)

- i. The workers of iniquity/wickedness do not know.
- ii. And they consume God’s people like they consume food.
 - 1. Those who devour my people *as if* they were eating bread!
 - a. Their lack of knowledge of God infects the way they treat the people of God—consuming and destroying them.
 - b. **Micah condemns the ruling elite/leaders of Israel: Micah 3:2-3** ² “You who hate good and love evil, Who tear off their skin from them And their flesh from their bones, ³ *Who eat the flesh of my people*, Strip off their skin from them, Break their bones And chop *them* up as for the pot And as meat in a kettle.”
- iii. Note in this verse: “ignorance, iniquity & persecution!”

9. Refuse God (4b)

- i. They do not call upon God.
- ii. **One of the most sweeping indictments upon a people**—don’t call upon the LORD.
 - 1. **And as for Yahweh**, they don’t call upon Him! They have *absolutely no regard for God*.
 - 2. Note **one translation**: of v.4: “They eat up my people like bread and wouldn't think of praying.”
 - 3. *As one writer says*: “Practical atheism is, of course, prayerless”.
 - a. A horrible indictment on the wicked—prayerlessness.
- iii. **Make certain your life isn’t characterized by prayerlessness. This is among the utmost of Christian virtues that we must have daily!**
 - 1. **Call on the LORD** – Gen 4:26; 1 Chron 16:8; Ps 145:18
 - 2. **Isa 55:6** – call on him!
 - 3. Believers are those who “call on the name of the LORD” – 1 Corinthians 1:2; **Romans 10.13.**

10. Terrified consciences (5)

- i. They are in great dread. Lit. “they are fearing with fear” they are “trembling with trembling” they are deeply fearful with fear.
- ii. **WHY?** God is with the righteous generation!
 - 1. But *there*, they are **terrified** with **terror** = “overwhelmed with dread” (NIV), “absolutely terrified” (NET), “in great dread” (NASB), “terror will grip them” (NLT).
 - 2. **The reason for their dread is because**: to oppose God’s people is to oppose God Himself (see Saul in Acts 9.4).

11. Overtly hostile (6)

- i. The “*you*” in v.6 refers to the wicked, ungodly. So they are trying to put to shame the counsel/plans of the poor ones.
- ii. **Why?**
- iii. Because the LORD is a refuge for him. God is a high refuge & a towering mountain to which the righteous person can find protection from any & all harm!
 - 1. But just know that **Yahweh is a refuge for the poor one!**

- a. **Deuteronomy 15:11** Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.
 - b. **2 Samuel 22:28** You save the humble but your eyes are on the haughty to bring them low.
 - c. **Psalm 12:5** "Because of the oppression of the weak and the groaning of the needy, I will now arise," says the LORD. "I will protect them from those who malign them."
 - d. **Zechariah 7:10** Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.'
 - e. **James 1:27** Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.
2. When someone messes with the poor and afflicted of the land, ***God will intercede and bring vengeance and divine retributive payback!***
 - a. **Romans 12:19** Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

What a horrible condition! What hopelessness! What helplessness! What a dire, urgent, condition! It has emergency written all over it. Rather, it has “dead already” written on it.

The Westminster Confession:

“Man by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

Jonathan Edwards agreed:

“the will of man always chooses what the mind thinks is best, and because the unregenerate mind never thinks that God’s way is best, a sinner will NEVER act in a way that pleases God until GOD first transforms the sinner’s inward nature” (in: “The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended in 1758; in Boice, 49).

Galatians 3:10 "CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM."

But glory to God -- the Bible never stops here!

II. **BECAUSE IT GLORIFIES THE SOVEREIGN DELIVERANCE OF GOD!** (7)

1. **Salvation for Israel in History**

- i. Leave the *entire psalm as is* having been written by David (as the text says!) and the last phrase refers to “***Yahweh’s deliverance from misfortune.***” Hence, it could be translated: O that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion when Yahweh restores the misfortunes of His people...”
- ii. It can refer to Israel when it is restored to its land & enjoys the blessings of God.

1. **Zephaniah 2:7** For the LORD their God will care for them And restore their fortune.

2. **Salvation for Mankind in Redemption**

- i. When God’s people see the acts of God’s redemption, they rejoice & exult!
 1. *after the Israelite exile*, they saw God’s faithfulness in the restoration.
 2. *But the psalmist may also* indicate the future era when God will vindicate his people & deliver them from misfortune & evil (Millennial Kingdom).
- ii. God is the one who restores the misfortune of his people—*Israel*. And by application, the people of God are those who benefit from God’s *glorious restoration & deliverance!*

NOTE (v.7):

1. God **INITIATES**
 - a. *Salvation when the Lord...*
2. God **ACCOMPLISHES**
 - a. *The Lord restores...*
3. God **RESTORES**
 - a. *The Lord restores the captives*
4. God **PROTECTS**
 - a. *Of His people; security.*

Concluding Applications! 2 commands!

- **Rejoice!**
- **Be glad!**

CONCL-

Concluding Illustration

- Of course Paul picks up on this in **Romans 3:10-20**. That is why **Paul can say in Romans 3:23** ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,
- Don’t be a fool and try to deny there’s a God. But be wise and live as if God were actively scrutinizing every moment of your life!
- *End with GOSPEL—Ephesians 2:1-10!!*

How marvelous, how wise, how great

How infinite to contemplate:

Jehovah’s saving plan.

He saw me in my lost estate

Yet purposed to regenerate

This faithless, fallen man.

—James Montgomery Boice.

- And yet for us, we must ask: “**Who is a greater fool?** The one who “says in his heart, ‘there is no God’”, or the one who knows in his heart that there is a God, yet lives as if there is no God?”

O the glory of God’s salvation which is by grace from beginning to end!