

Bible Study on Hermeneutics – Handout Session 14
 Controversial Doctrines, Practices, and Passages – Total Depravity
Grace Bible Chapel
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 Pastor/Teacher Jim Bryant

Understanding Calvinism - continued

The 5 points of Calvinism are all interconnected – beginning with Total Depravity. If Total Depravity is true, then logically all the rest must be true as well. However, we must have clear definitions of what each is or is not.

A Comparison of Arminianism with Calvinism

By David Steele and Curtis Thomas - Originally posted on Archegos: the Champion Statement on offsite articles

Arminianism	Calvinism
<p>Free-Will or Human Ability Although human nature was seriously affected by the fall, man has not been left in a state of total spiritual helplessness. God graciously enables every sinner to repent and believe, but He does not interfere with man's freedom. Each sinner posses a free will, and his eternal destiny depends on how he uses it. Man's freedom consists of his ability to choose good over evil in spiritual matters; his will is not enslaved to his sinful nature. The sinner has the power to either cooperate with God's Spirit and be regenerated or resist God's grace and perish. The lost sinner needs the Spirit's assistance, but he does not have to be regenerated by the Spirit before he can believe, for faith is man's act and precedes the new birth. Faith is the sinner's gift to God; it is man's contribution to salvation.</p>	<p>Total Inability or Total Depravity Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not - indeed he cannot - choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ - it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation - it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.</p>

Man's condition in sin

Total Depravity – what the Scriptures say:

- **It's origin** – Gen 2:16-17; 3:1-24; James 1:14-15
- **It's imputation** – Rom 5:12-18; Ps 58:3; 1 Cor 15:22; Heb 2:14-15
- **It's consequences** – Gen 3:7-24; Prov 19:3; Is 59:2; Jer 17:9; John 3:36; 5:42; 8:44; Rom 5:10; 7:18,23; 8:7, 20-23; Eph 2:1-3; 4:18; Rom 3:9-20; 2 Tim 3:2-4; Tit 1:15; Heb 3:12; 1 John 5:19

It's consequence related to total inability – John 1:13; 3:5; 6:44; 8:34; 15:4-5; 1 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 3:5; Eph 2:1, 8-10; Heb 11:6. "When we speak of man's corruption as total inability, we mean two things: 1) that the un-renewed sinner cannot do any act, however insignificant, which fundamentally meets with God's approval and answers to the demands of God's holy law; and 2) that he cannot change his

fundamental preference for sin and self to love for God, nor even make an approach to such a change. In a word, he is unable to do any spiritual good." *from Louis Berkhof's Systematic Theology.

The Calvinism argument – All people are born spiritually dead, being under our federal head Adam, and having a sin nature ruined at the fall. No person of his own will can therefore come to Christ for salvation. Faith does not originate with any person, they must first be effectually drawn by God's Spirit in order to exercise faith.

Scriptural support: Gen 6:5; 8:21; Deut 30:6; Job 14:4; Ps 51:5; 58:3; 143:2; Jer 13:23; 17:9; Eze 36:26-27; Matt 7:16-18; 19:25-26; 23:37; Luke 24:45; John 5:21; 6:37, 44, 63-65; 8:31-32; 34, 43, 47; 15:16; Acts 13:48; 16:14; 18:27; Rom 1:18-23; 3:9-18; 6:20; 8:5-11; 9:16; 14:23; 1 Cor 2:14; 4:7; 2 Cor 4:4-6; Eph 2:1-10; Phil 1:29; Col 2:13; 2 Tim 2:25-26; Titus 1:15; Heb 11:6; 12:2.

- Blindness of mind and heart – 2 Cor 3:14; Eph 4:18; Rom 3:11, 17; 1 Cor 1:21
- Disordered affections – Heb 3:12; 10:38; Jer 2:13; Col 3:5; 1 Cor 10:6; Jms 1:14-15
- Corrupted conscience – 1 Cor 8:12; 1 Tim 4:2; Heb 10:22; Isa 5:20;
- Disabled will – Prov 21:10; John 6:44; John 8:36; 1 John 5:19*

*From "Gleanings from the Scriptures" A.W. Pink

The reasoning can be illustrated by By Greg Gibson "JesusSaidFollowMe.org"

In the fall, did Adam & his offspring lose their **desire and ability** to come to Christ? After Adam and Eve sinned, did they move toward God, or hide from Him?

- "Adam and his wife **hid** themselves from the presence of the Lord God" (Gen. 3:8).

Did Adam initiate contact with God, or did God initiate contact with Adam?

- "Then **the Lord God called to Adam** and said to him, "Where are you?" (Gen. 3:9).

As a fallen sinner, were you just spiritually sick, or spiritually dead?

- "for in the day that you eat of it you shall **die**." (Gen. 2:17).
- "you...who were **dead** in trespasses and sins...even when you were **dead** in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ" (Eph. 2:1, 5).
- "And you, being **dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive" (Col. 2:13).

The spiritually dead can't raise themselves. They must be raised by God. Could you spiritually see the gospel, or were you spiritually blind?

- "yet the Lord has not given you **a heart to perceive & eyes to see & ears to hear**" (Deut. 29:4).
- "I speak to them in parables, because **seeing they do not see**, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand...For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and **their eyes they have closed**, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." (Mt. 13:13-15).
- "Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: 'He has **blinded their eyes** and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'" (Jn. 12:38-40).
- "to **open their eyes**, in order to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins" (Acts 26:18).
- "there is **none who understands**" (Rom. 3:11).
- "But their minds were **blinded**." (2 Cor. 3:14).

- **"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded,** who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

The blind can't see, until God first gives them sight. Could you spiritually hear the gospel, or were you spiritually deaf?

- "yet the Lord has not given you **a heart to perceive & eyes to see & ears to hear**" (Deut. 29:4).
- "I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and **hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand**...For the hearts of this people have grown dull. **Their ears are hard of hearing,** and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them." (Mt. 13:13-15).

When you were spiritually dead, blind, & deaf, did you desire & seek God, yes or no?

- "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that **every** intent of the thoughts of his heart was **only evil continually.**" (Gen. 6:5).
- **"men loved darkness** rather than light because their deeds were evil." (Jn. 3:19)
- "For everyone practicing evil **hates the light and does not come to the light**" (Jn. 3:20)
- **"haters of God"** (Rom. 1:30)
- "There is **none who seeks after God.**" (Rom. 3:11)
- "I was found by **those who did not seek Me**; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me." (Rom. 10:20).

Are unbelievers not sheep because they don't believe, or do they not believe because they're not sheep?

- **"But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep."** (Jn. 10:26)

When you were spiritually dead, deaf & blind, were you born again by your will, or God's will?

- "who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, **nor of the will of man, but of God.**" (Jn. 1:13)
- **"it is not of him who wills,** nor of him who runs, **but of God** who shows mercy." (Rom. 9:16)
- **"of His own will He brought us forth** (birthed us) by the word of truth" (Jas. 1:18)

How much of a part did you have in willing your own physical conception? None! Your parents conceived you by their own wills. As it is with physical birth, so it is with spiritual birth. You didn't ask to be birthed. The Father birthed you.

Then, the question arises, "If fallen, dead, deaf, blind sinners can't come to Christ, then how do they come to Christ?" Does God give the new birth because they believed, or so that they can believe? In other words, is faith the cause of the new birth, or is the new birth the cause of faith? To believe that fallen, dead, deaf, blind sinners repented and believed to be born again is like getting the cart before the horse. Logically, they must have first been spiritually born again, before they could repent and believe in Christ.

Practical Conclusions:

- God is God
- He chose some – He was not obligated to choose any!
- He chose some not based on anything meritorious about them!
- All men are undeserving!
- God makes the offer to all men!
- Man of his own will rejects God – therefore man is accountable.

What should be my perspective?

- Salvation is of the Lord.

- I look exclusively to Him for mercy – He is merciful!
- I trust His Word in all matters.
- I give thanks each day that I know Him.
- I seek to help others know Him.

A Significant Point:

- **What about the good man natural man does?** “Reformed theologians generally say that he (un-renewed man) is still able to perform: 1) natural good; 2) civil good or civil righteousness; and 3) externally religious good. It is admitted that even the un-renewed possesses some virtue, revealing itself in the relations of social life, in many acts and sentiments that deserve the sincere approval and gratitude of their fellow-men, and that even meet with the approval of God to a certain extent. At the same time it is maintained that these same actions and feelings, when considered in relation to God, are radically defective. Their fatal defect is that they are not prompted by love to God, or by any regard for the will of God as requiring them.” *from Louis Berkhof’s Systematic Theology.
- **Natural men** – are born in Adam under a curse. That curse has so ruined them that even though they have a will, with a body, soul, & spirit, made in the image of God to rule, and have creativity; and they are moral beings with reasoning, and have been given a conscience, they are none-the-less by nature all the things the Bible describes concerning them (lovers of darkness, truth suppressors, enemies of God, unrighteous, full of deception and lies, etc...). They are also in an environment equally under the curse where their experience, motivation, and education are all tainted by a mixture of good and evil. They are also constantly tempted, and held captive by the temptation. They are to a degree held from complete ruin by the common grace of God (Gen 20:6; 2 Thess 2:7; Rom 1:18-28). In these conditions they make life’s decisions with the resulting fruit being the deeds of the flesh described in Galatians 5:19 and following.

Additionally, as natural men embellish their suppression of truth, God “gives them over” (withdraws His common grace) so that they plummet deeper into the fuller expression of their depravity until they exhibit a depraved mind (rationally disqualified or incapable of making a rational decision). This exhibits the fuller manifestation of their condition in sin. Yet they continue to be accountable to God (Rom 3:19).

- It should be considered that when distinguishing between the natural man and the saved man (or Christian) they are alike in many ways. The natural man and the Christian both have will, personality, ambition, gifts, abilities, needs, and desires (this is not an exhaustive list). It should also be understood that both may equally exhibit morality, human good, pleasant presentations of themselves, be of value to society, be religious, live a disciplined life, and be educated and smart. However, the real differences come based on a closer examination of the characteristics of their life. The characteristics shown are not exhaustive, but reflect primarily what is stated in 1st John.

The Natural Man

The Christian Man

Self-centered	-----	God-centered
Uses others	-----	Love’s others
Word of God is foolishness	-----	Word of God treasured
Walks by sight	-----	Walks by faith
Focus is on this world only	-----	Sojourner attitude
Held captive by sin	-----	Over-comer (power of God)
Have the wisdom of this world	-----	Have the wisdom of God
Fears man	-----	Fears God (reverence)

“You will know them by their fruits” Matthew 7:16