



Vol. 4

Lexington, Kentucky

November 1972

No. 2

DEPRAVITY--TOTAL, UNIVERSAL,
INHERENT

Depravity is a word that describes the state or disposition of man considered as a moral being. A moral being is one who is accountable to God for his thoughts, speech, and conduct. Depravity means the moral corruption of human nature; it refers to the state of sinfulness natural to the unregenerate.

Depravity is the opposite to what is required by the law of God. The sum of the divine law is love to God and our neighbor. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22:37-39). Paul says that love is the fulfilling of the law. "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not

commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:8-10). Depravity then must consist of the lack of love required by God, and the setting up of some other object or objects in the human affections. And all the objects set up in competition with God may be reduced to one, and that is self. Private self-love is the very root of depravity, the grand substitute in our affections for love to God. Self-will, self-admiration, and self-righteousness are but different manifestations of depravity.



Location: 3.3 miles out Bryan Station Road. Right on Briar Hill Road.

- Sunday School 9:45 a.m.
- Worship Service 11:00 a.m.
- Evening Service 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting 7:30 p.m.

Air-Conditioned Nursery Provided

Pastor Alfred M. Gormley
Ph. 299-1430 347 Sierra Drive
Lexington, Ky. 40505

Depravity is that state of nature that causes man to put self in the place of God, and to seek his own gratification, honour, and interest as the ultimate end of all his actions. Every moral being ought to live and act for the highest good, and the highest good is the glory of God. Depravity is the corrupt nature that leads men to act for self glory. The very essence of sin is selfishness. Take the first and last letters off the word SIN and you have the letter "I". Take the word "Self" and spell it backwards, adding the letter "h" and you have the word "flesh." And the Bible uses the word "flesh" to denote the corrupt nature of man. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not." (Rom. 7:18). "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). "It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

When Paul describes men under a variety of wicked characters, the first link in the chain is: "lovers of their own selves." (II Tim.3:2). This love of self is the fountain of depravity from which all evil thoughts and actions flow; it is the womb from which all sinful expedients are born; it is the incubator in which all evil intentions are hatched.

Depravity is total, reaching to all the faculties of the soul; it is universal, taking in all men by nature; and it is inherent, by which we mean that it is the result of original sin, transmitted by natural generation or physical birth.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Total depravity means that man is depraved or corrupted in all the faculties of his being. It is not a question of degree but of extent. It does not mean that any man is as bad as he can become, or that he is as wicked as the devil. It does not mean that men are equal in the degree or amount of sin. But it means that man is depraved in all his faculties. Drop a grain of arsenic into a glass of water, and the water is totally affected. Every drop of the water is poisoned. Put in another grain of arsenic and the poison is not extended, but it is intensified. It is not poisoned in more of its parts, but each part to a greater degree. So man, a child of wrath by nature (Eph. 2:3) may become more depraved.

The natural man is not partly depraved, that is in spots, but the whole of his being is depraved. The carnal mind is enmity against God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7). The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9); (Matt. 15:19); and the will is in bondage to sin (Jno. 6:44; Jno. 5:40; Phil. 2:13). The human will is no better than the mind and heart that control it. Men choose what they do because of the state of their minds and hearts.

Total depravity means that man, as the result of original sin, is morally or spiritually dead. And dead is an adjective that does not

admit of comparison. There are no degrees of death, but there are degrees in death. Let us illustrate. Here is a physical corpse; the man has been dead one day. He is totally dead. Here is another corpse. The man has been dead one week. He is no more dead than the other man, but the corpse is in worse condition. Now the Bible presents the natural man under the figure of a moral or spiritual corpse. Here is a young girl of sixteen summers, beautiful, vivacious, and charming. She knows nothing of the life of the brothel. But that girl, if an unbeliever in Christ, is morally or spiritually dead. She is lacking in love to God and to her neighbour as a creature of God. And her depravity is manifested in pride of apparel, pride of beauty, disobedience to parents, lack of interest in the word of God, etc. Here is another moral corpse. She is a woman of the brothel; her virtue is gone and she is abandoned to a life of sin and shame. She drinks, and swears, and smokes, and lies and steals, and breaks up homes. She is no more dead than the girl of sixteen, but she is in a worse condition in moral death.

Moral death does not mean that man does not exist as a moral being. The unregenerate performs moral actions, but his morals are bad. Theft, and murder, and lying are all acts of a moral being, but they are wicked acts.

UNIVERSAL DEPRAVITY

Universal depravity means that all men are depraved. Every man, apart from inwrought grace, is lacking in that which the law of God requires. He does not love God, neither does he love his neighbour as the creature of God. It is only the born again ones who love God (I John 4:7); who understand the things of God (I Cor. 2:14; Jno. 3:3; II Cor. 4:4); who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (I Jno. 5:1); or who practice righteousness (I Jno. 2:29).

In Noah's day it is said that "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5). Of David's day it was written: "There is none that doeth good, no, not one" (Ps. 14:3). And Paul quotes this verse from David and applies it to the people of his day (Rom. 3:10). The only man free from corruption of nature since the first Adam sinned and fell was the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, and his birth was not according to the law of natural generation. To deny the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth is to make him a sinner. And who wants to trust a sinner as Saviour?

INHERENT DEPRAVITY

Depravity of nature is transmitted to all men by natural generation. Like begets like; that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and the carnal or fleshly mind hates God.

The early appearance of sin in the child is proof that depravity of nature is inherited. The very first act that discovers reason in the child has sin in it. Watch the child when reason begins to dawn, and it will express itself by doing harm to others, or by lying, or by pride of apparel, or by natural inclination to revenge. Have not all

parents quieted the baby by beating that which had hurt or offended it? The small child at the very dawn of reason manifests a spirit of revenge towards others and a dislike for God.

Inherent depravity is seen in the fact that the child will sin without being taught to sin. "A child left to himself puts his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). Only leave the child to act naturally and freely, and it will shame its mother.

Inherent depravity is directly taught in many Scriptures. "Behold I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Ps. 51:5). David is not casting reflection upon his mother's virtue; he is confessing to a sinful nature received in birth. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Ps. 58:3).

The Scriptures which teach the necessity of the new birth prove that depravity is total, universal, and inherent. Regeneration is not of parts but of persons; the whole psychic being is born again. And every man needs the new birth, for except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. If depravity were not hereditary, the new birth would not be necessary; training and education would bring one into the kingdom of God. If there were a spark of goodness it could be fanned into a flame, and a birth from above would not be essential to salvation. May both writer and reader abhor themselves for what they were by nature and rejoice in what they are by God's amazing grace!

—By the late C. D. Cole