

HOW SINFUL IS MAN? (Why Don't Men Come to Christ?)

INTRODUCTION

A Christian must have right doctrine before he can have right practice. Theory must always precede action if action is to have any meaning at all. In simple words, one acts upon what he knows.

Christians, if they are to be effective witnesses, must get a Biblical concept of evangelism. The first doctrine to understand is that of the sinfulness of man. POINT: How a Christian preaches, deals with sinners, and uses evangelistic methods will be affected by his concepts of the sinfulness of the unsaved world.

The high value and importance of the Cross in salvation are directly related to one's viewpoint of man's sinfulness. The Bible states that all men are sinners by acts (Romans 3:23), by nature (Eph. 2:3), by imputation (Rom. 5:12-19) and by declaration (Rom. 3:9; Gal. 3:22). POINT: The sinful condition of man is so horrible and deplorable that God had to send His only begotten Son to die for sinners and redeem them from the slave market of sin. Our sin cost God the one He loved the most, His Son.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Introduction. All evangelicals would agree that men are sinful but not all agree on the depths of man's sin. The issue is whether man is partially or totally depraved. Depravity is a theological word to point out man's sinfulness. The words "total" or "partial" simply tell us to what degree man is sinful. POINT: Wrong views about salvation can always be traced to wrong views about the sinfulness of man. The hardest thing for a human being to realize is how sinful he really is before a Holy God. Man can only see his own sinfulness as he honestly and objectively comes to the Bible and accepts what God really says about man.

Views on the Sinfulness of Man. In Christendom, there are three basic viewpoints held on the sinfulness of man.

1. Man is diverted (liberals). Man's character and nature is not that of a sinner but he has seen a bad example in Adam's fall and needs to be shown a good example in Christ. Man can be educated out of his bad ways. This view actually denies the sinfulness of man and emphasizes that all men are basically good with a spark of divinity. This view invariably leads to universalism (that all men will be saved).
2. Man is diseased (Arminians or freewillers). Adam's sin had some effect upon his posterity. Humanity is very sick and in need of a spiritual physician. Jesus Christ is that physician who left sin's cure by man's sick bed when He came into the world and died for the sins of the world. Man, by his own freewill, that was not totally corrupted by sin because of the Fall, must get this medicine and take it himself. Man is not so corrupt that he cannot come to Christ by his freewill. This view was made famous by Arminius and is widely held in modern day fundamentalism.

3. Man is totally corrupted (Calvinists or sovereignists). Adam's sin brought condemnation to his descendants, and, as a result of that condemnation, the corruption of man's nature and his spiritual death became a reality. Death means inactivity and the inability to respond; it is an utterly helpless condition from which it is impossible for a man to transport himself. God must take the initiative for the sinner if he is to be saved. This view seems to be more Biblical.

Definition of Total Depravity: That inherent corruption which extends to every part of every man's nature because he is a sinner with no spiritual good towards God or meritorious favor in the sight of God. Man's mind (Eph. 4:18), emotions (John 3:19) and will (John 6:44; 8:34) are corrupted by sin. The unsaved person is in a hopeless and helpless condition because of sin and unable, in his own strength, to do anything to save himself. POINT: Total depravity does not mean that sinners cannot do good at times (relative moral good). It does mean that all people are separated from God because of sin and, if they are to be saved, God must take the initiative to save them.

The Sinful Condition of the Unsaved Man According to the Bible.

1. He is spiritually dead (Eph. 2:1-3).
2. He cannot know spiritual things (1 Cor. 2:14).
3. He is blinded by Satan (2 Cor. 4:4-5).
4. He is not seeking God (Rom. 3:10-12).
5. He is rebellious to God (Rom. 8:7; 5:10).
6. He is under sin and God's condemnation (Rom. 3:9).
7. He is hardened (Eph. 4:18).
8. He has no spiritual understanding (Eph. 4:18; Rom. 3:11).
9. He is without faith (Heb. 11:6).
10. CONCLUSION: The unsaved man is in a deplorable, helpless and hopeless condition and is unable, by any efforts of his own, to come to God through Christ. Unless God intervenes, there is no hope of salvation for the hell-deserving sinner.

The Spiritual Condition of the Unsaved Man According to the Bible.

1. He cannot see the kingdom (John 3:3).
2. He cannot hear Christ's word (John 8:43).
3. He cannot receive the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17).
4. He cannot please God (Rom. 8:8).
5. He cannot be subject to God's law (Rom. 8:7).
6. He cannot know the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14).
7. He cannot cease from sin (2 Pet. 2:14).
8. He is dead (Eph. 2:1).

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEMS DEALING WITH TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Question: If man is not able to trust in Christ without Divine enablement, how is it that there are so many commands and exhortations in the Scripture for the sinner to believe?

Answer: There are several ways to answer this question:

1. Some say that the command to believe was given to show men that they cannot believe in their own strength; thus they will cast themselves on the sovereign mercy

and grace of God to save them (i.e. God commanded the Israelites to keep the Mosaic Law, knowing that no one could keep it).

2. Others feel that the commands to believe are related to the offer of salvation to all. If a person responds positively to Christ, efficacious grace was working in the person all the time.
3. POINT: No one denies that a sinner must trust in Jesus Christ by an act of his will. No one has ever come to Christ against his own will, but the sovereign grace of God was quietly working in the person so as to make him willing to believe.

Question: Why does our Lord say to those Israelites in Jerusalem, “You would not come?” (Matt. 23:37). He did not say they “could not” come, but they “would not come,” indicating man’s free response to Christ’s offer. Were Christ’s plans thwarted because of Israel’s rejection?

Answer: Our Lord is looking over the whole history of Israel and sees that generally they had been rejecters. If any were saved, it was by pure grace. They would not come because they were basically sinful and rebellious. This section is primarily dealing with man’s response, and there is a mystery between man’s response and God’s sovereign purpose.

THE PRACTICALITY OF THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

It Demands Dependence upon God. If man cannot respond to God unaided, then the Christian must be utterly dependent upon God to work in the life of the unsaved person.

It Shows the Need of Prayer. If man cannot respond to God unaided, then God must do a work. It is the Christian’s privilege to use prayer as a means to petition God to enlighten, convict, draw and regenerate the unsaved person.

It Keeps Down Discouragement. When the Christian goes out into the world to witness, he often finds opposition to the gospel. Believing in total depravity a Christian can understand why there is such opposition on the part of the unsaved to Christ. The Christian realizes that the unsaved will respond to Christ when God does a supernatural work in the heart.

It Makes Salvation Supernatural. Salvation is all of God. The sinner cannot respond to God without being aided by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the whole salvation process is supernatural.

It Causes One to Stress Sin and Its Consequences. The person who believes in total depravity will stress the sinfulness of man in his preaching and witnessing, showing the sinner that only in Christ is there deliverance from sin and hell.

It Brings a Great Appreciation for the Grace, Mercy and Love of God. When the sinner sees himself as lost and headed for judgment with no hope he panics and turns to Christ. But when the saint realizes that he is a child of God because of a supernatural work of God, he gains a new appreciation of God’s grace, love and mercy.

Read: Eph. 2:1-10