

# Total Depravity

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read, Paul's letter to the Ephesians and chapter 2.

Ephesians chapter 2, and if we just read again, verses 1 to 3. Where Paul writes, And you are 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.

Now, as the summer comes to an end, and we now move into the season of autumn, well, most of you would say it's probably winter tonight, but as you know, as we move into the season of autumn, many of the flowers which we've seen, some of you have probably planted, they are beginning to wilt and to die.

But you know, for the Christian, there's one flower that should never die. There's one flower that should always be in the forefront of our minds. Now, it's not a rose, it's not a daffodil, it's not a Livingston daisy, it's a tulip.

And like myself, you might not be a good gardener, but, and you might not even have any interest in flowers, apart from admiring their beauty. But you know, this flower is a flower that we need to know, and it's a flower that we need to understand in all its beauty.

[ 1 : 51 ] Because I believe that when we understand this flower and all its beauty and all its complexity, it will cause us to respond in praise and adoration for the Lord. And I say this because a tulip, it reminds us that our salvation is not of ourselves, it's all of grace, it's a gift of God.

Our salvation is all of the Lord from beginning to end. And of course, I'm sure that you've guessed by now, that the tulip is not actually a flower, it's an acrostic.

It's a word that encapsulates the beauty and the wonder of the doctrines of grace. Those doctrines, that teaching, which presents to us the glory of the gospel in our salvation.

And that our salvation, it's a gift of God, and it's all of the Lord. And it's this tulip that I'd like us to consider and even admire over the next coming weeks.

Because as many of you know, tulip is an acrostic for what has become known as the five points of Calvinism. Because tulip, T-U-L-I-P, stands for total depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints.

[ 3 : 08 ] This is the beautiful tulip that I would like us to consider and admire over the next few weeks. But you know, what's interesting is that even though the acronym tulip, even though it's often associated with the French reformer John Calvin, that tulip, and it's often referred to as the five points of Calvinism, what's interesting is that John Calvin never came up with this acrostic.

It was penned long after he had died. Because John Calvin, he was born in France in 1509, and he died in Switzerland in 1564. But the five points of Calvinism, they weren't penned until 1618, which is about 70 years later, and they were penned in the Netherlands.

And these five points of Calvinism, they were penned in order to counter five points of Arminianism. And Arminianism, it came from the teaching of a man called Jacobus Arminius, who also had died before the five points of Arminianism were penned.

But you know, in 1618, there was this divisive church council that was held in the Netherlands, and it was called the Synod of Dort. And it was held because there was this theological dispute within the Dutch Reformed Church.

Because on the one side, there were the Arminians, and they were promoting the teaching of this man called Arminius, and they were known as the Remonstrants. And then on the other side of the debate, there were the Calvinists who promoted the teaching of John Calvin, and they were known

as the counter-Remonstrants.

[ 4 : 45 ] And what's remarkable is that these theological positions, they became nationalised. And Holland was actually a country split in two. But of course, the purpose of the Synod was to bring a resolution to the matter.

And there were all these representatives who gathered in 1618 to this Synod of Dort, and they came from all parts of the Reformed Church, from Britain, from Germany, from Switzerland. They all came together.

And the outcome of the Synod of Dort was the five points of Calvinism that directly refuted the five points of Arminianism. And they became popularly summed up with the acrostic tulip.

And as I mentioned, this is a flower that we need to know, and it's a flower we need to understand. Because it's then, it's only when we know it and understand it, that we will respond and praise and adoration to the Lord.

And so this evening, we're considering the T, the T of tulip, which stands for total depravity. Total depravity. And I'd just like us to think about total depravity under three headings.

[ 5 : 53 ] The death of mankind, the dungeon of mankind, and the deliverance of mankind. So there are the three headings this evening. The death of mankind, the dungeon of mankind, and the deliverance of mankind.

So first of all, the death of mankind. The death of mankind. Paul says in verse one here, in Ephesians two, he says, and you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

Now I want you to imagine in your mind that this evening, we're all gathered in a hospital ward. And there's a patient just stretched out before us.

He's on a bed and we're all gathering around as a group of experts here to investigate. And well, we need to ask the question, what's the condition of this patient?

And so we call Dr. Paul into the ward and we say to him, Dr. Paul, what's your diagnosis of this patient? And Paul, he looks at the patient and he walks around and he says, as he says here in verse one, he's dead.

[ 7 : 00 ] Dr. Paul, are you sure? Yes, the patient is dead in trespasses and sins. Well, surely there's something we can do for the patient. Surely there's something we can do to arouse this patient.

And Dr. Paul says, no, the patient is dead. The patient is dead in trespasses and sins. But of course, we need a second opinion. We can't just go in the words of Paul because, well, we don't want to pull the plug in case the patient is still alive.

And so let's call in this man we mentioned earlier, Jacobus Arminius. Dr. Jacobus Arminius. And he comes into the ward and he looks at the patient. He walks around the patient and this patient who's stretched out on the bed and Dr. Arminius, he says, well, the patient is not quite dead.

He's semi-conscious. There's a little bit of life in him. And if you were to poke him or if you were to speak to him eloquently with reason or with wisdom or maybe even shout at him passionately, then he could wake up if he wanted to.

The patient could respond to your voice and get up off the bed if he wanted to. But, you know, with two contradicting opinions, we have to call in another doctor, a third opinion.

[ 8 : 17 ] So let's call in John Calvin. And Dr. Calvin says, well, I agree with Dr. Paul. this man is dead. There's nothing you can do for him. There's no way he could get up off this bed of his own accord and then walk out.

This man is dead. He cannot resurrect himself. He needs an outside intervention in order to be brought back to life. You know, as we gather around this patient this evening, these opinions who are all coming from the experts in their field, we have to ask this one question.

What happened to the patient? How did this patient come to be in the condition that he's in? How did he end up just lying here, lifeless? And Dr. Paul tells us he's dead because of his trespasses and sins.

Well, what's the patient's name? Dr. Paul looks at the patient's notes and he says, he's called Adam. And he's in his condition because he broke God's law.

He trespassed the boundary line of God's word. He missed the mark of God's holy standard and the result is that he's dead in his trespasses and sins. He's dead because God said to him in the garden of Eden, you may eat of every tree of the garden but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it for in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die.

[ 9 : 46 ] God promised that if Adam disobeyed, Adam would be trespassing the boundary line of God's holy word and Adam would sin and fall short of the mark that God had set and the outcome of such disobedience would be death.

The Lord said in the day that you eat thereof you shall surely die. In fact, the warning was actually stronger than that because the Lord said to him you will most certainly die.

You will be put to death and sadly that's what happened. We read that in Genesis 3. The father of lies, the devil, he comes in the form of a serpent, he directly contradicts the word of God as he always does and Satan says to Eve you shall not surely die.

You will not be put to death because the day that you eat this fruit your eyes will be opened you'll be like God you'll know good and evil. And you know it's the greatest lie that was ever told and it brought the greatest death that was ever experienced the death of mankind.

And you know what a death it was because Adam Adam was created as king Adam was the first man he was the king of creation he was the climax and culmination of God's creative work he was made on the sixth day the last day and he was made as the apex of God's creation he was made in the image and likeness of his creator he was made with perfect knowledge perfect righteousness perfect holiness he was made without sin yet he had an ability to sin Adam was sinless he was beautiful he was glorious and he enjoyed this perfect relationship with God and he even had a perfect marriage with his wife Eve Adam had a perfect life and the Lord had breathed into him the breath of life but now as we gather in this hospital ward around his bed the condition of the patient is not that good Adam is not what he once was and Dr.

[ 12 : 01 ] Paul is telling us and Dr. Calvin is agreeing with him this man is dead he's dead in his trespasses and sins and because he's dead Adam is unable to resurrect himself he's completely incapable of coming back to life and he'll remain in that condition unless an outside influence brings him back to life this is total depravity because our patient Adam he's completely dead he's unable to respond to any physical treatment he can't hear us no matter how much we shout at him he doesn't move doesn't matter how many times we poke him he's dead it doesn't matter if we speak to him with wisdom or eloquence or passion he's dead he can't open his eyes he can't rise from the dead he can't change his heart he can't even open his mouth to confess his sin he's dead he's a lifeless corpse unable to move but you know what's frightening

Adam's death Adam's trespasses and sins it brought everyone into the same condition when Adam died we died when Adam sinned we sinned our catechism reminds us that we sinned in Adam and we fell with him in his first transgression and this is what Paul teaches as in Adam all die but in Christ shall all be made alive this is what we're just singing about in Psalm 51 David confessed that he was conceived in guiltiness and sin he was sinful from his mother's womb from his first beginning you know it was R.C.

Sproul he said we're not sinners because we sin we sin because we're sinners we're not sinners because we sin we sin because we're sinners and that's a key point we're sinners from our mother's womb we're born with the sin of Adam and so when we look at our patient Adam and we see the effects of trespassing the boundary line of God's holy word and we see the effects of missing the holy standard of God's law we see that Adam is totally depraved he's dead and we see that that's what our condition was like without Christ that's what we were like we were completely dead unable to respond but do you know there's more than that Adam is not only dead he's in a dungeon unable to escape and that's what I'd like us to see secondly the dungeon of mankind we've considered the death of mankind but secondly the dungeon of mankind let's read again these verses verses 1 to 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 and you know as we consider the doctrine of total depravity the illustration is not only of Dr. Paul diagnosing his patient Adam and saying that he's a dead corpse unable to come to life we're also given the illustration in verses 2 and 3 of a cold dark dungeon because the trespasses and sins of Adam have not only brought him and they've brought all of us into this estate of sin and misery where we're not only dead we're also in a dungeon we're in chains because of our sin we're in bondage to sin we're imprisoned by sin we're enslaved to sin and because we're in this dungeon our sin has affected every area of our lives our heart our emotion our mind our body our will it's all in bondage it's all enslaved to sin and you know the bible clearly sets before us all these things because we're told in

Isaiah that our righteousness is as filthy rags Jeremiah reminds us that our heart is sick it's deceitful above all things and desperately wicked Jesus said that from out of the heart comes evil thoughts sexual immorality theft murder adultery coveting wickedness deceit sensuality evil slander pride foolishness and Jesus is all these things come from within our heart and they are what defile a person my friend the condition of a sinner without Christ is an awful condition because we're born in sin we're a dignity with God our mind can't understand spiritual things our body is enslaved to sin our will is that we love darkness rather than light and we suppress the truth in unrighteousness and because of our depraved condition the way of sin seems right the gospel is rejected because it looks like nothing but foolishness and the heart is hostile and hardened towards the things of God and you know what Paul is saying here is that without Christ we're in this dungeon and our sin has affected every area of our lives our heart our emotion our mind our body our will it's all in bondage it's all enslaved to sin that's what he's saying here in verses 1 to 3 without Christ we're dead in sin we're in the dungeon of despair we've lost communion with

God we're under his wrath and curse we're made liable to the miseries of this life to death itself and to the pains of hell forever our depraved nature and the radical corruption of our heart is such that we would never choose God of our own accord with such a depraved heart we would never seek after God without him taking the initiative and you know this is what Paul speaks about actually when he speaks to the Romans in Romans chapter 3 Paul gives all these scriptural references that confirms our total depravity as sinners because Paul asks he asks the question in Romans 3 have some people got a better standing with God than others are some partially depraved and others totally depraved and Paul says no not at all and from that Paul launches into quoting all this scripture and he says as it is written none is righteous no not one no one understands no one seeks for God all have turned aside together they've become worthless no one does good not even one and then

[ 19 : 26 ] Paul he brings his argument of total depravity he brings it to its conclusion by saying all have sinned and come short of the glory of God the mess that sin has made in our lives is that it has affected every area every area our heart our emotions our mind our body our will it's all in bondage it's all enslaved to sin but Paul's teaching on total depravity is that we're not as sinful as we could be but our nature has become so depraved and so corrupted that we're completely affected by sin we're not as sinful as we could be but we certainly have the capability to reach our potential and that's what's frightening but you know God in his wisdom and in his mercy God has given to us a conscience a God given conscience although Adam sinned we still have traces of Adam's perfect nature it's a marved nature because we still have the sense the sense of right and wrong we still have the ability to do good and to be nice people to love people to care for people we even have the ability to conform to some of

God's laws but what total depravity emphasizes is that even our good deeds they are all tainted and corrupted by sin our righteousnesses are as filthy rags in God's sight because well when our deeds are not done to the glory of God when they're not done by faith in Jesus Christ they're all being done by selfish ambition and selfish gain when we're without Christ and walking according to the course of this world as Paul says here our good deeds are motivated by not by a desire to please God but to please ourselves and the reality is we're totally corrupted to the point that God declares there is none righteous no not one and so as we stand in this cold dark dungeon and we see Adam chained in bondage imprisoned and enslaved to sin you know the Arminian he would say well he's only partially depraved he's only tainted by sin he's still able to rise out of he's able to rise from the dead he's able to free himself from the dungeon take off his shackles he's able to do it all if he wishes he's able to resurrect himself if that's his desire he's able to take off the chains and open the dungeon door and run to Jesus if and when he wants to but that's not what scripture tells us it is scripture says that our totally depraved nature it must agree with the Calvinist that mankind is completely lost and incapable of rising from the dead and we are unable to free ourselves from the dungeon and the question you know the question that arises from all this is how then are we to be saved how then are we to be saved if we're lost incapable of rising from the dead and we're unable to free ourselves from the dungeon how then can we be saved and you know what's amazing is that the disciples asked the same question you remember when Jesus was talking to his disciples and he had said to them it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven and you know when the disciples heard this they were completely astonished and they asked Jesus who then can be saved but Jesus looked at them and said with

man this is impossible but with

God all things are possible and the point that Jesus was making is that God is the saviour we can't save ourselves we're completely lost we're incapable of rising from the dead we're incapable of freeing ourselves from the dungeon of despair therefore says the Calvinist God must predestine God must predestine and we'll consider the election and predestination next week but you know when we see that salvation is all of the Lord we realise that sinners can't save themselves they're dead in their trespasses and sins they're enslaved to sin and the hardest thing is they're all around us all these people who are still dead in sin and enslaved to sin they're all around us they're in our home they're in our family they're our children they're our spouse they're our neighbours they're those whom we work with they're unable to respond to the gospel sometimes they're indifferent to the gospel even uninterested or even hostile to the gospel and it doesn't matter how many times we speak to them or plead with them or encourage them or invite them they won't respond that doesn't mean we give up not at all we keep going but they don't respond because they're dead they're a lifeless corpse that can't hear see or understand they don't respond because they're in a dungeon they're chained and shackled and imprisoned by sin and there's nothing we can do to save them and you know sometimes that's the hardest thing to accept there's nothing we can do to save them and I know this can cause so much heartache for over our own loved ones sometimes it causes frustration you know as a minister it can be so frustrating that you preach to people week in week out and you seek to lift up to them the beauty of

Jesus Christ in the gospel and yet they walk away unmoved and unchanged as if it's just washing over them but that's because they're dead they're in the dungeon and without the Lord intervening in their lives without the Lord working in their heart without the Lord taking the initiative they won't respond they can't be saved and you know that's why we have to keep bringing them to the Lord in prayer that's why we have to keep pleading with the Lord for the Lord to work in their lives that's why we have to keep pleading that the Lord will give to them a knowledge of the truth because he's the only one who can bring life into their experience he's the only one who can bring them from darkness to light he's the only one who can bring them from death to life he's the only one who can bring them from the dungeon to liberty the only one the initiative must be from the Lord why because the Lord is to get the glory and salvation the Lord is to get the glory not the preacher not the

Christian witness not the Sunday school teacher not the elder the Lord is to get the glory the initiative to be saved it doesn't come from ourselves it comes from the Lord he initiates the work of salvation in our lives he initiates it all you know this is what I want us to think about lastly and briefly we'll touch upon this again and again in the coming weeks so we've considered the death of mankind we've considered the dungeon of mankind but lastly I want us to consider the deliverance of mankind the deliverance of mankind look at verse 4 but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in

[ 27 : 44 ] Christ Jesus so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus for by grace you've been saved through faith and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast for we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them these verses are some of the most beautiful verses in the New Testament because having described the death of mankind and the dungeon of mankind Paul now gives to us the deliverance of mankind and Paul makes it absolutely clear here that our salvation is all of God the initiative is God's the gift of salvation is God's to give and ours to receive it's not of works it's not of ourselves it's not by anything we've done or achieved and this is the case so that we will not rob God of his glory it's all of grace it's all of grace and that's what Paul is saying to us we're dead in trespasses and sins we're in the dungeon chained and shackled and enslaved to sin but God but God

God took the initiative God made the first move God planned your salvation God worked out your salvation God worked into you your salvation this is the wonder of it but God and you know those two words should sum up our whole Christianity but God I was dead in sin but God I was in a dungeon enslaved to sin but God without Christ I was had no hope but God I was on the broad road that leads to destruction but God I was heading to a lost eternity in hell but God my friend this is the

wonder and beauty of our salvation that it's all of grace from beginning to end by grace you have been saved through faith and this and this is not your own doing it is the gift of God not a result of works so that no one may boast I'm sure that many of you have heard of the Wesley brothers John Wesley and Charles Wesley they were preachers during the 18th century what's interesting is that even though they were brothers from the same home same family they had a different theology John Wesley was an Arminian Charles Wesley was a Calvinist and it was Charles Wesley who wrote that famous hymn and can it be I'm sure you've heard it before the hymn begins and can it be that I should gain an interest in the saviour's blood died he for me who caused his pain for me who him to death pursued then he says amazing love how can it be that thou my God should die for me but then Wesley he went on to describe his own conversion Charles Wesley that is he went on to describe his own conversion from being dead in sin and in the dungeon of sin to being delivered from sin and he says long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night thine eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee beautiful words my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee the deliverance of man he was delivered and you know when we think about what the Lord has done in our salvation that we are those who were totally depraved how the Lord has worked salvation in us by grace alone you know when we think about what the Lord has done it should cause us to respond like Charles Wesley amazing love how can it be that thou my God should die for me may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee that thou art a gracious God that thou art one who does not deal with us according to our sin but one who deals with us in love who deals with us in mercy who deals with us in grace and we thank thee O Lord and we praise thee that thou art the God who intervenes in our lives who stops us in our tracks who causes us to see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ and Lord we pray that we would praise thee more for the wonder of salvation that we would praise the God who has intervened in our lives and drawn us to himself made us heirs with God joint heirs with Christ made us children of

[ 33 : 26 ] God righteous in his sight and holy in the beloved help us Lord to see our salvation as precious and to see us as thy people who are precious who are being made more and more into the image of thy dear son Jesus Christ bless us Lord together as we study thy word help us to apply it in our lives and help us Lord to live it out for thy glory and for the furtherance of thy kingdom keep us we pray for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake amen shall bring our service to a conclusion by singing the words of psalm 62 psalm 62 in the Scottish Psalter page 294 psalm 62 we're singing from verse 5 down to the verse marked 8 and in these words David reminds us that it's the

Lord alone who works salvation in our life he says in verse 5 my soul my soul wait thou with patience upon thy God alone on him dependeth all my hope and expectation he only my salvation is and my strong rock is he he only is my sure defence I shall not moved be shall sing on down to the verse marked 8 of psalm 62 to God's praise my soul wait thou with patience upon thy God alone on him dependeth all my hope and expectation he only my salvation is and my strong rock is he he only is my sure defence

I shall not move with thee in God my glory place it is and my salvation sure in God the rock is of my strength my refuge most secure he will place your confidence confidence in him continually before him pour ye out your heart

God is our refuge I the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forever more amen