

Total Depravity: Big Objection, Free Will

January 14, 2018

OT

Isa 1:10-15

Isa 1:10 Hear the word of the LORD, you rulers of Sodom! Give ear to the teaching of our God, you people of Gomorrah! 11 "What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices? says the LORD; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of goats. 12 "When you come to appear before me, who has required of you this trampling of my courts? 13 Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me. New moon and Sabbath and the calling of convocations-- I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hates; they have become a burden to me; I am weary of bearing them. 15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

NT

Eph 2:1-5

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 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-- 3 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. 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved--

Context? (introduction)

So far in Ephesians:

- Two Sundays ago: our life before we were brought into the Church
- Last Sunday: in-text doctrine: total depravity, (3 sermons, Eph 2:1, 5)

1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins. ... 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses,

- What is total depravity?
- Big objection: what about free will?
- Big objection: what about good deeds?
- Why is total depravity a big deal?
- Gospel focus:
 - Need (ours): to escape all lies about our own abilities.
 - Remedy (Jesus): to see the truth about how hopeless we truly are
 - Joy & Glory!: to abandon self-reliance and rest in Christ-reliance
- Caution: 3 dangers
 - Denigrating God's word:

Jh 6:60-63 Many of his disciples said, "This is very hard to understand. How can anyone accept it?" Jesus was aware that his disciples were complaining, so he said to them, "Does this offend you? Then what will you think if you see the Son of Man ascend to heaven again? The Spirit alone gives eternal life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

- Dismissing God's warning:

Jer 6:13-15 From the least to the greatest, their lives are ruled by greed. From prophets to priests, they are all frauds. They offer superficial treatments for my people's mortal wound. They give assurances of peace when there is no peace. Are they ashamed of their disgusting actions? Not at all-- they don't even know how to blush! Therefore, they will lie among the slaughtered.

- Defaming God's worth:

You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery?
You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan

temples? You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you. Rom 2:22-24

Focus? (attention)

Gospel focus: does God's declaration (of your total depravity) offend you?

Text? (explanation)

The Big Topic: two big objections to total depravity.

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ... 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses.

First Big Objection: but we have free will!

(Seven considerations: function, blindness, enslavement, cursed, hates God, refuses) God

- *Free will is a function of our soul.
Free in sense that it operates according to nature.
But our nature is totally depraved, dead in sin*

Jh 1:12-13, 12 But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God. 13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Ecc 1:13a, I devoted myself to search for understanding and to explore by wisdom everything being done under heaven.

Ecc 11:9, Young people, it's wonderful to be young! Enjoy every minute of it. Walk in the ways of your heart and the sight of your eyes. That is, do everything you want to do; take it all in. But remember that you must give an account to God for everything you do.

MK 7:20-23, 20 It is what comes from inside that defiles you. 21 For from within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit,

lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. 23 All these vile things come from within; they are what defile you.

Jh 8:44a, You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires.

Will is free to act according to our nature; and our nature is totally depraved.

- **Blind**

Jer 17:9, The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked. Who can know how bad it is?

2Co 4:4, Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don't understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

Acts 26:17-18, 17 And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles 18 to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

Will freely chooses what it sees and understands, but our nature is blind to truth.

- **Enslaved**

Joh 8:34, 43-44a, 34 Jesus replied, "I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave of sin. ... 43 Why can't you understand what I am saying? It's because you can't even hear me! 44a For you are the children of your father the devil, and you will to do the evil things he does.

Gal 4:8-9, 8 Before you Gentiles knew God, you were slaves to so-called gods that do not even exist. 9 So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaves once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?

2Pt 2:19, They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption. For you are a slave to whatever controls you.

Will freely chooses what soul desires, but our nature is enslaved to sin.

- *Cursed*

Job 25:4-6, 4 How can a mortal be innocent before God? Can anyone born of a woman be pure? 5 God is more glorious than the moon; he shines brighter than the stars. 6 In comparison, people are maggots; we mortals are mere worms.

Ps 51:5, For I was born a sinner-- yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.

Jas 1:14-15, 14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

Rom 7:18-24, 18 And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can't. 19 I want to do what is good, but I don't. I don't want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. 20 But if I do what I don't want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. 21 I have discovered this principle of life-- that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. 22 I love God's law with all my heart. 23 But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. 24 Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death?

Will freely chooses what soul thinks-feels-desires, but our nature is cursed.

- *Hating God: disposition, demeanor of the soul*

Joh 3:20, All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.

Rom 1:30, They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents.

Rom 8:7, For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will.

Eph 4:18, Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far from the life God gives because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

Col 1:21, This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions.

Will freely chooses what we want, but it is our nature to hate God.

- *Refusing God: action of the life*

Ps 10:4, The wicked are too proud to seek God. They seem to think that God is dead.

Isa 64:7, Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins.

Ps 53:2-3, 2 God looks down from heaven on the entire human race; he looks to see if anyone is truly wise, if anyone seeks God. 3 But no, all have turned away; all have become corrupt. No one does good, not a single one!

Pro 1:7, 22, 29, 7 Fear of the LORD is the foundation of true knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline. ... 22 How long, you simpletons, will you insist on being simpleminded? How long will you mockers relish your mocking? How long will you fools hate knowledge? ... 29 For they hated knowledge and chose not to fear the LORD.

Jer 18:11-12, 11 Therefore, Jeremiah, go and warn all Judah and Jerusalem. Say to them, "This is what the LORD says: I am planning disaster for you instead of good. So turn from your evil ways, each of you, and do what is right." 12 But the people replied, "Don't waste your breath. We will continue to live as we want to, stubbornly following our own evil desires."

Will freely chooses what we want, but it is our nature to refuse God.

- *Utterly unable*

1Sa 24:13, As that old proverb says, 'From evil people come evil deeds.'

Jer 13:23, Can an Ethiopian change the color of his skin? Can a leopard take away its spots? Neither can you start doing good, for you have always done evil.

Mt 7:18, A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit.

Rom 8:7, For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot.

Will freely chooses what we want, but since our nature is totally depraved, our will is utterly unable to choose to obey God.

Review (for Joy & Glory!)

Gospel focus: is God's declaration (of your total depravity) offend you?

- Need (ours): to escape all lies about our own abilities
- Remedy (Jesus): to see the truth about how hopeless we truly are
- Joy & Glory!: to abandon self-reliance and rest in Christ-reliance

Big Objection: but we have free will!

Will is free to act according to our nature; and our nature is totally depraved.

Will freely chooses what it sees and understands, but our nature is blind to truth.

Will freely chooses what soul desires, but our nature is enslaved to sin.

Will freely chooses what soul thinks-feels-desires, but our nature is cursed.

Will freely chooses what we want, but it is our nature to hate God.

Will freely chooses what we want, but it is our nature to refuse God.

Will freely chooses what we want, but since our nature is totally depraved, our will is utterly unable to choose to obey God.

So what hope is there?

Eph 2:4-5 **4 But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, **5** even when we were dead in our trespasses, **made us alive together with Christ**-- by grace you have been saved--