

Amazing Grace: Intro to Reformed Theology

Week 4 – Total Depravity

Reformed Theology – “An expression of the Christian faith that is centered and grounded on the Sovereignty of God in all things.”

The Sovereignty of God and the Salvation of Man

- 1610 and the Arminians (remonstrants) – The 5 Articles of Faith
- 1618 and the National Synod of Dort – The 5 Points of Calvinism (main distinctive of RT)
 - T – total depravity
 - U – unconditional election
 - L – limited atonement
 - I – irresistible grace
 - P – perseverance of the saints
- GOD SAVES SINNERS

Total Depravity and Sin

- Original Sin – Genesis 2:16-17; Genesis 3:1-7; Romans 5:12
- “We sin because we are sinners.” RC Sproul
- Every aspect of our being is corrupt - Romans 3:9-18
- Separates Christianity from other World Views (your greatest problem is you)

Total Depravity and Ability

- We do not have the ability to accomplish what is necessary for salvation.
- We are dead! – Ephesians 2:1-5
- The power comes from outside of us. - John 6:44, 65
- We are lost and need to be found. Not sinking, but dead on the ocean floor.

Total Depravity and Free Will

- Decisions and choices are based on desires.
- By nature we do not desire or choose God. – Romans 3:11, 13
- Until our nature is changed (salvation through regeneration) we only have the “freedom” to chose sin and reject God.

- Prior to the Fall: born innocent with the potential to sin
- After the Fall: born sinful with the inability not to sin
- After Salvation: The ability not to sin
- After Glorification: The inability to sin

Why Does It Matter? (practical application)

- Gospel centrality (God saves sinners from beginning to end)
- Compassion (We're all dead in our trespasses)
- Culture (Perspective on the brokenness of this world)
- Parenting (Our children are not born innocent)
- Worship (High view of God, Low view of Man)

Discussion Stories:

1. When you think of your own faith, it is possible that you remember very clearly a time when you did not believe if you became a Christian later in life; conversely, you may have been raised in the Church and cannot remember a time when you did not believe.

When you talk of your salvation and relationship with God, how do you normally discuss it? More in terms of something you have done (e.g. "I chose to believe") or in terms of something God has done ("God opened my eyes/God drew me")?

2. It is important to make sure we have clear definitions of our terms in order to understand what is being said. The doctrine of "total depravity" is often misunderstood. How did Pastor Rob define total depravity? What do we mean by "total"? Is everyone as bad as they could be?
3. Look at Romans 3:9-26. Likewise, Ephesians 2 refers to us as being "dead in our sins and trespasses" until God "makes us alive." What do the Scriptures say that human beings are like in this passage? Are we morally neutral? What are the natural inclinations of all of us, "both Jews and Greeks" as Paul says? On the other hand, where does our righteousness come from?

4. While total depravity may appear to be terrible news, it is an incredibly helpful doctrine that has the ability to transform our perspective of the world and our approach to it. How is it a positive thing for us to understand the depth of our sin? How does this relate to our ability to acknowledge our own wrongdoing or to ask others for forgiveness? How might this help us to be merciful with others?

5. Discuss the practical benefits of this doctrine that Pastor Rob discussed. How does this doctrine apply to our lives in other ways? Where's the good news for us all here?