

Tulip - Part 2 (Total Depravity 1)

by John Piper

John Piper explores the concept of total depravity, emphasizing the necessity of understanding our sinful nature to appreciate God's grace in salvation.

Duration: 35:22

Scripture: Acts 17:27, Romans 3:9-11, Romans 3:19, Romans 3:23, 1 Timothy 1:15-17

Topics: "Total Depravity", "Calvinism"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the concept of total depravity and its implications. He explains that no one is exempt from sin and that even the smallest transgression makes a person guilty of breaking the entire law. The speaker then introduces the five points of Calvinism, focusing on the first point of total depravity. He emphasizes the importance of parents being vulnerable and broken before their children, acknowledging their own flaws and sinfulness. The sermon concludes with a personal letter from the speaker's son, expressing gratitude for his parents' love and understanding of God's unfailing love.

Transcript

This is the Wednesday night section of the Bethlehem Institute on the teachings of Calvinism, the five points of Calvinism, and we're in our second week of ten. And I want to begin with a passage from 1 Timothy, just by way of a devotional thought to set our hearts right and pray over before we move into the lesson. 1 Timothy 1, verse 15 through 17.

The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. Nobody else, just the sinners. That's the only people He relates to, savingly.

But, I receive mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, that is the foremost of sinners, Jesus Christ might display His perfect patience for an example to those who were to believe in Him for eternal life. It's a marvelous text for evangelism. Because Paul is saying the reason God chose a murderer and a persecutor of Christians is that He might demonstrate His perfect patience for an example to people you're going to talk to who say they're too sinful to be saved.

And they are not. Nobody is too sinful to be saved. To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever.

Amen. Father, as we look at total depravity tonight, I pray that we would be made spiritually sensitive to our true condition. I pray that we would have the capacity to own our corruption and our sickness called sin.

I pray that we wouldn't try to slough it off as something for which we are not responsible, blaming parents or genes or upbringing or you. And I ask, O God, that we would be humbled by the recognition of what we are really like. And that we would come before this night is over to cherish the gospel and the free grace of God as never before because we have seen ourselves in a true light as utterly unworthy of it and yet gloriously saved by it.

In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. I gave an introduction last week to this acronym TULIP, T-U-L-I-P.

Let me rehearse those five points for you again briefly and show you why it's a remarkable thing that they fall into that order because that order agrees with the order in which these great events happen. Not the order, however, in which we experience them happening. So next week I will probably not take up the U, but rather the I, but I'll explain that later.

Let me sum it. Total depravity is the condition upon which God looks even before eternity. That's T. U, He unconditionally chooses a people for Himself to save out of that corrupt mass of humanity upon which He looks.

That's U. He then efficiently and effectively atones for their sin in the blood of His Son purchasing for them every good that comes to them including their faith. That's L, limited atonement. Then He sends forth the Holy Spirit in tremendous power applying this atonement to the hearts of people by drawing them to faith, overcoming all of their resistances and saving them.

That's called irresistible grace, I. And then on behalf of those people He mightily keeps them from falling away and restores them to faith after every backsliding and brings them to glory. And that's called P, perseverance of the saints. So that's the order and it is most remarkable and wonderful.

So we take up the T tonight, total depravity. Let me say a word or two of introduction. This is very important.

Churches today are evangelistic strategies today that pass over this rather than helping people understand their true condition are not doing them a favor because if you jump over total depravity to the work of God in salvation they don't have a clue what they're being saved from. Most people will conceive of salvation as being saved from a bad marriage or a drunken spree or a deep depression or bad financial circumstances or a terrible sickness or just a rotten life which has nothing to do with total depravity. Now that's an overstatement obviously.

Total depravity yields up all those things. But if you don't get at the root of those things as to who you really are you won't understand what we're being really saved from. So tonight the real point of talking about total depravity is to magnify the cross.

It's to magnify Jesus so that when you come to die you'll say like that great old saint and some of you would know who it is and I can't remember who it is who said on his deathbed one thing or two things I know. I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior. And if you don't know the first one you won't know the second one.

So this is important. Another thought is that no true faith I want to be careful here maybe I better say no deep faith will be had without a true understanding of our bondage to sin because in believing the Lord we won't believe Him for all that He has done for us including the resurrection of our dead, depraved hearts. So faith cannot be fully, deeply exercised if we don't know that on which we are depending on Him to save us from.

Another thought about the importance of this Humility. John Calvin said Christianity is three things Humility first, humility second and humility third and he meant the massive dependence on God for everything. Now think about in your life right now the problems that would be solved if you were more humble.

Think about marriage problems right now. If you were humble enough not to be so demanding and insistent that your way is the only way you'd have a better marriage or parenting. If you were humble enough to apologize to your child for the way you lifted your voice excessively last night your child might be saved.

I got an email this week and it's from my son Benjamin and I talked to him on Monday night and usually we talk to Benjamin about once a week. He lives in Georgia. He's 23 years old and he usually is the one that gets prayed for as he is struggling with where to go to school and relationships and job and being 23 and in between everything and I confessed to him some discouragement in my heart and some needs that I had and he prayed for me and we hung up and within about 30 minutes there was this email and I want to read it to you because this is all about how to be a parent who awakens the right things in your kids.

I'm very thankful for your encouragement and prayer for me in these days. I cannot express what it means to me to receive your consistent unending love. Sometimes when I talk to you and mommy on the phone it is as if the Lord picks me up and holds me in his arms.

When I hang up I am filled with peace knowing that God's love will never fail and I have learned to understand his love from you. You might find this hard to believe but tonight was the first time that I remember hearing discouragement in your voice. He has a very bad memory or it may be just the first time I have felt the discouragement in you.

I am sure that it is mainly due to my blindness growing up but somehow under the surface my picture of you was someone above discouragement. I hope you will understand what I mean when I say that I was encouraged to see your discouragement. However, your discouragement itself did not encourage me but seeing all of who you are increases my love and respect for you.

My heart hurt when I hung up because of the heaviness that you were feeling and because I love you so much. I do not know if this will make any sense to you or if you will understand how much it means to me but I love having a weak daddy. I mean for this to be encouraging I mean for this to be encouraging which of course it massively is and not discouraging but what I feel in my heart is difficult to put into words.

I hope you can read into my heart a little to see what I am attempting to say. I love you Benjamin. Now listen dads and moms you got to get broken before your kids.

Okay? Because goodnight the reason he does not remember I cried over Benjamin dozens of times after I spanked him. I mean he is just not remembering these things. But he has this image of a daddy who is just he does not have problems and he is in charge and he is So one of the ways to win your kids back and we need to do that over and over again with this boy is to be broken before them.

So it might help tonight if you pay attention to these texts that you are all pretty rotten people and if you do not let your kids hear about that and say to them like I had to do to him a few nights when I slammed the door on his bedroom because he was so resistant and resilient to all our conversations and I could hardly sleep and he was already asleep and so I put it off which I should not have done and had to go in there on my face in the morning and say I was all wrong. I was all wrong. You got problems.

Sure. But that was wrong right here. Okay.

Let's go. Seeing our depravity in relation to God is crucial. The reason it is crucial is because when you hear the word total depravity all kinds of questions come to your mind about wait a minute.

I am not nearly as bad as I could be or I do not do as many bad things as I could do. That is obviously true, right? You have not shot anybody today and you could have. You could have swerved over and plowed into somebody killed yourself and them.

You could have gone and bought a pint and fouls yourself tonight. There are a lot of things you have not done that you could have done. So this issue of total depravity raises questions and we need to get at it by realizing that it is in relation to God that our depravity is seen not primarily in our relation to men.

1 Corinthians 10.31 Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do do all to the glory of God. Now if we are to do everything to the glory of God it is not just when you do bad things that you fail. It is when you do good things not for the glory of God.

And everybody who is not leaning on God does them not for the glory of God therefore everything they do is bad. As it says in Romans 14.23 He who doubts is condemned if he eats because he is eating not from faith. And whatever is not from faith is sin.

He is dealing with some pretty innocuous things here. Eating certain things or not eating certain things. As far as he is concerned he does not care whether you eat vegetables or meat.

You have Christian freedom. You can eat anything you want provided it is eaten in love and is having good effects in your life. Then he says the problem is some of you are killing your conscience because you are doing something not out of faith.

You are not trusting God that it is a good thing to do or for the strength to do it or for the production of something good in your life and that is sin. Now the implication of that sentence right there is absolutely staggering. Whatever is not from faith is sin because that means unbelievers only sin.

That is total depravity. It does not mean to kill each other and have adultery and steal every hour of every day as much as they could. It means all the humanly good things.

You see we use the word good in layers of ways. Who is not going to say that building a hospital in some impoverished neighborhood is a bad thing when some pagan philanthropist does it. But it is an offense to God at one level.

It is like a son. And you say I would like you to wash the car before you go out on a date tonight. If you want to use the car I would really appreciate it if you would wash it.

And he says I don't want to wash the car. Good grief. And you say that is the deal we have.

That is the way it works. You use the car. You wash the car.

So wash the car. And he storms off to his room stomping and fuming and realizes you really mean this. You have got the keys.

And he wants his car so he goes out and washes the car fuming, steaming. So he obeyed, right? He built the hospital. And that is sin.

That is sin. That attitude stinks. It is all wrong.

And people that ignore God in their good deeds offend God. James 2.10-11 is an amazing text. Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one point he has become guilty of all.

Now what? What is that? Because nobody in this room is going to stand up here and say I have never offended in one thing. Everybody is going to at least be willing. No matter what a rosy picture of yourself you have you are all going to be willing to say at least I failed in one thing.

And then James comes along and says you keep 99.44% of the law and stumble in 56% point whatever, I lost that analogy somewhere. I think it is ivory soap. You stumble in one little thing and guilty of all.

So how can that be? How can that be? How can he say that? Doesn't he know me and Jeffrey Dahmer are not the same? Here is what he means. For, that is an important word he, that is God who said do one thing don't commit adultery also said the other things do not commit murder. Do you get that argument? If you miss one thing you are guilty of everything because, here is the argument the same God who said one or two or 99 things he uses adultery as an example also said the one you didn't like.

So it seems to me James is thinking like this.

Okay five things you did right today five commandments you kept or maybe nine and then you were real covetous as you went shopping or saw this friend's car or whatever real covetous and you yielded to it you thought about it you resented that you don't have that car hmm, whatever so you broke the tenth commandment but nine, I got nine right so I'm 90% okay and only 10% bad and that's good enough to pass anybody's test a 90 is a B and James says here's the problem the God who said to you don't covet you looked into his face you pondered his heart and his will and you said to that God no and that same God said all these other things and so the God who said them all you just said no you said no to that God and the unity of the commandments is the unity of a person obedience is not a response

to pieces of commandments obedience is a response to a person and if you look a person with the authority of God in the face and he says no here's the place where the battle is being fought right here, covetousness my will is resist that trust me I'll take care of you and provide your needs don't yield to that and you say I'm going to yield to this you have broken God you have cut yourself off from God you have taken God in all that he is and if you try to defend yourself by saying I got nine right you're really just saying I can pick and choose from God I can pick and choose from his grocery list of commandments and the ones I'm going to do I'll do and the ones I'm not going to do I won't do and you've become a lawbreaker you've become a transgressor of the law and so the sense here is

God's at stake God's at stake in every little, little transgression I don't think this text means that there's no variation in levels of guiltiness because we have teaching elsewhere in the Bible to the effect that even in hell there will be varied punishments okay that was all just to say that we've got to keep God central in

thinking about depravity human depravity is total in at least five sentences I have four in the book I added this number one it's not essential to the nature the nature of depravity but I wanted to include the extent of the depravity here in the human race so I'll just say these very familiar texts number one depravity affects I don't think I meant affects yes I did affects every human all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God Romans 3.23 1 Kings 8.46 there

is no man who does not sin Psalm 143.2 do not enter into judgment with your servant O Lord for in your sight no man living is righteous 1 John 1.8 if we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us so those four passages and there would be others show that the totality of depravity embraces the totality of the human race all have sinned all are sinners no one does not sin second sense in which there is total depravity our rebellion or hardness against God is total that is apart from the grace of God there is no delight in the holiness of God and there is no glad submission to the sovereign authority of God this is an important phrase apart from the grace of God because I assume that most of you in this room do have a delight in the holiness of God and do have a

glad submission to the sovereign authority of God but what we will learn over the next weeks is that the proper way to understand that is that didn't come from you that came from the precious work of the Holy Spirit in your life enabling you and freeing you to respond to the truth and beauty of who God is apart from that there is no delight in the holiness of God and there is no glad submission these next four points I'm going to make are word for word in the TULIP booklet so if you're scrambling to get this written down word for word I think I added that word right there there are a few other changes I've made in preparing for tonight but they're there okay, here are a few texts to show what that means and to undergird it in Romans 3 what then?

Paul says, are we any better than they? are we Jews any better than the Gentiles? no, not at all for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks that's everybody are all under sin and when we preach through Romans we'll talk about this under sin under sin under the power in the grip of this awful reality called sin and don't equate the singular sin with the plural sins merely because in Paul's mind there are sins lying, stealing, cheating, coveting general acts of unlovingness but there's this big, awful, terrible, powerful reality called sin under which we all live that grips us and holds us that's not equatable merely with the list of misdeeds verse 10 as it is written there is none righteous not even one verse 11 there is none who understands there is none who seeks for God there

is no fear of God before their eyes now we could spend a good bit of time and I don't want to spend too much arguing with this and there would be some good biblical arguments against taking it literally for example Acts 17 27 where God has appointed the boundaries of their habitations in order that they might seek God as I've compared the text that talk about the seeking after God in the pagan heart and this denial that anyone seeks for God I think there's several ways to think of this word here they're not always the same word this ek-ze-te-oh here is not the same as ze-te-oh exactly and that may be a clue but I think what Paul means is number one nobody seeks out of true humble heartfelt reverence for God religions are in one sense of seeking for God and there are religions all over the

world but religions become a means of protecting people from the true God more often than they become stepping stones to finding the true God therefore Paul when he sees the kind of groping that he saw in Athens he saw a kind of seeking but it's not the kind of seeking he has in mind here where there is a fear of God a genuine there is no fear of God before their eyes or another possible meaning here would be no one seeks for God successfully in other words there is a bent towards religiosity in the world in America

today it is in to be spiritual you got to add a little component of spirituality especially if you got kids got to figure out the spirituality of your kids we got to get that into their lives so some send them to church some send them to whatever just find some spirituality

somewhere in America a little New Age spirituality or a little Hindu spirituality or a little Muslim spirituality or a little Zoroastrianism or a little astrology or something because we all know there is a bigger thing than we in the world in the universe and so Paul knows that sort of thing happens in the world and he says that's not a mark of anything other than depravity that kind of seeking John 3 comes at it another way this is the judgment that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light for their deeds were evil sweeping statement about the love of darkness in the human heart for everyone who does evil hates the light does not come to the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed now you'd stop there and say wait a minute some people come to the

light verse 21 but he who practices the truth comes to the light so there are people who practice the truth right there so they're not totally depraved so God's coming on the lookout for people that are good and he saves the good ones but he who practices the truth comes to the light so that his deeds his practices of the truth his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God what does that mean? this little Greek word means by agency wrought in God means God wrought them God enabled them to do these if if you find a Cornelius in the world who's praying seeking you find a person in whom God's grace is at work drawing wooing so yes there are people who come to the light we'd have no hope in evangelism if there weren't and you may have in mind here Jews that are already linked to

God savingly in the ways they could be through the Old Testament before there was Jesus but you can't argue from this that they weren't depraved and in need of God to do the work in their lives please turn the tape over now for the remainder of the message

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