

# Depravity - I

by Rolfe Barnard

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*The Bible teaches that man is totally depraved and utterly lost, and that the truth about his condition must be determined by the standards of God in Christ.*

**Duration:** 25:00

**Scripture:** Genesis 3:6, Psalm 14:1-3, Isaiah 53:6, Matthew 6:33, Romans 1:18-32, Romans 3:9-18, Ephesians 2:1-3

**Topics:** "Depravity"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and teaching the five basic teachings of the Word of God. These teachings include the condition of man, the eternal purpose of God in salvation, the person and work of Jesus Christ, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and the nature of faith in Christ. The speaker warns against straying from the truth and emphasizes the need for a renewed study of the Word of God and reliance on the Holy Spirit for enlightenment. The sermon also addresses the divisions and controversies within the church regarding these teachings and calls for unity in preaching the true gospel of Jesus Christ.

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## Transcript

My friends, this morning I'm beginning some messages that I've announced, I think, last Lord's Day, on the five basic teachings of the Word of God, to which we've been making reference for the last several Lord's Days, and about which we've said that they foundation the gospel of God Almighty in Jesus Christ our Savior and our Lord. We have taken time over this broadcast to go into the twofold controversy or division that to a greater or lesser extent determines our gospel preaching, and that certainly is among us today to divide us in our conception of the nature of salvation that God has provided in Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior of men and women. Now, I promise that after going into the divisions of the past we would take up these five basic teachings and seek to come to some knowledge afresh of what the Bible says about each of these five.

The five, let me remind you, are first, the condition of man, second, the eternal purpose of God in salvation, third, the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in salvation, fourth, the person and work of God the Holy Ghost in salvation, and fifth, the character and nature of that faith by which a man is vitally joined to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, we need to remember that no man can speak as an oracle of God. We are shut up to what the Bible teaches, and I'm saying to you that there is a thin line between truth and error.

Sometimes it's much thinner than we surmise, and it's mighty easy to go off in the wrong direction in the matter of truth. And another thing is that truth is hard to come by now. We are not living in the days of the fullness of the Spirit, and everything is agony, agony to come to God in prayer.

It's agony now to try to find out what the Spirit of God has said and wants to teach us in the word of God. And we are influenced by prejudices and by what we've been taught. Some of what we've been taught may be so, and some of what may be taught may not be so.

But I say to you that the task of all of us as witnesses of a good confession of Jesus Christ in this day is to do our dead-level best to come to the truth of these five great basic teachings of the word of God. Now I hope I'm not wasting my time, and I do not believe I am, in talking as I have been for some months and shall continue to do so in the hope that I may encourage all who are Christian, who've listened to a renewed study of the word of God and do a renewed cry to God the Holy Spirit for his enlightenment and for his fullness upon our witness, upon our testimony. I say that we've almost lost the real gospel.

I say that it's high time we quit bemoaning the fruit of what we've been preaching and begin to look at what we've been preaching. I say we ought to be on the mourner's bench, every Sunday school teacher and every public preacher and every witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. I say it's high time that we frankly face the fact that the gospel would not turn out the kind of people we call Christians today.

I'm glad for the awareness of the fact that by the fruit you shall know them, and we are having to turn the searchlight in upon ourselves to find out where we've heard, where we've made the Bible say what it does not say, and where we've made the Bible say less than it says. And so this morning with your indulgence, and I hope your interest, I want to talk to the subject of the condition of man that needs to be saved, or who needs to be saved, as it is taught in the words of the living God, in the language of the old timers. The Calvinists said man is totally depraved.

The Arminians said he is depraved, but not totally. And I do not want to get involved in those terms so much as I want them to drive you and to drive me back to the Bible that we may come to have the truth, not what somebody said in the past, but what the Bible teaches now. I believe that you'll agree with me that the condition of man determines the salvation that he needs, that the condition of man cannot be ignored in the prescribing of the remedy.

If we prescribe a false remedy or an inadequate remedy, we have not preached the gospel of the salvation of Jesus Christ. And so this morning for the next Lord's Day or two, I want us to have before us the subject of the actual condition of man since the fall he experienced in Adam, which is, of course, one of the great teachings of the Bible and is a fact of our experience. I want us to frankly face the condition of every man outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now to introduce from the Bible standpoint this series of messages that we're going to give on the condition of man, I want you, if you have time now, to turn in the word of God, if you have time, to the book of Romans, at chapter 1, and let's have a scriptural foundation for these discussions. And the messages for several Lord's Days will be based, as far as we're able, on these passages of scripture. They are two, and the first one is Romans 1, beginning at verse 18, and reading through verse 32.

The scripture is saying, and I'm reading from the authorized version, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them. For God hath showed it unto them. For the

invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse.

Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like the corruptible man and the birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves, who changed the truths of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator, who is blessed forever, so be it. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affection, for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meek. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, despiseful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

That's the description of men in olden days, and it reads like the front page of a modern day newspaper now. Now, another scripture, Romans chapter 3, just turn the pages one time, and we'll begin reading at verse 9 of Romans chapter 3. The Apostle Paul, describing the condition of men, says, What then? Are we better than they, that is, the Jews? No, in no wise. For we have before proved, both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.

As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth. There is none that seeketh after God.

They are all gone out of the way. They are together become unprofitable. There is none that doeth good, no, not one.

Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit. The poison of asp is under their lips, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.

There is no fear of God before their eyes. Now, here are two classic passages of the word of God that talk to us about the kind of people folks are. They introduce wonderfully us to the subject of the actual depraved, crooked, bent, deformed, misshapen condition of man as he comes to this world as a result of the fall he experienced in Adam.

Now, the term depravity is a Latin term that we have carried over into the English, and it means crooked or not straight. It means misshapen. It means deformed and so forth.

Now, the Bible certainly has something to say about the crooked, misshapen, deformed condition of man. The extent, therefore, of man's fall in Adam is the subject before us. How crooked is man in the sight of

God? How misshapen is man in the sight of God? How deformed is man in the sight of God? That's the question.

We have to find out what the Bible has to say about it, and our answer there will determine whether or not we preach a Savior who makes salvation possible if, or a Savior through whom and from whom, comes salvation itself, not only providing the purpose of God and the death and resurrection of Christ, but the gift of faith and the power of God to keep us united to the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the Bible teaches something about that condition of man. And when we speak of the depravity of man, we refer to the extent of man's fall in his father Adam.

We ask some questions, naturally. We say, what does the Bible say about how far man fell when he fell? And since the fall, and that includes us because we are people living, in whatever condition that fall brought upon us, not only how far did man fall, but in what condition is man now? As we try to witness to people, what kind of folks are we to witness to? What is their condition, spiritual and every other way, in the sight of God? And that question, of course, will lead to another question. As we witness to men and women, do we seek to bring help to them, or do we proclaim God's full and free and whole salvation, a salvation that will meet every need that man has, a salvation that will do justice to every requirement of God Almighty and his righteousness? These are important questions.

Now, by the term depravity, we do not refer to the degree of man's depravity, but to the extent. In other words, what I'm saying, when we say that men are utterly depraved, we do not mean that they are altogether morally depraved. We do not mean that some men could not be worse morally than others.

We dead sure know that's not so. And the Bible doesn't talk in the language that says that all men are morally alike and that there's no difference in their standards and customs and their acts. But the Bible, talking about the actual spiritual condition of man, says as to the extent of man's lostness or his fall in Adam, that that extent reaches to all of man's works, that it reaches to all of man's ability to save himself, and that it reaches to every faculty of a man's soul, his mind, his will, and his emotion or his affection.

And there we'll notice a tremendous difference as we go along. Is man depraved in every faculty of his soul? Some say yes, and some say no. And as they answer that question, it colors the gospel that they proclaim in the salvation they offer to sinful men.

Thus, my friends, as to the extent of the fall, we believe the scriptures teach, not as to the degree of his badness, but to the extent of the fall as it has to do with his works, his ability to save himself, not his ability to do a lot of things, but his ability to save himself, and to every faculty of the man, we believe the Bible teaches that man is totally, utterly, absolutely L-O-S-T, lost and cannot recover himself. And he'll either have to go to hell, or God Almighty will have to save him entirely. Now, later we're going to talk more on this broadcast of the difference between the term, the extent of the fall, and the degree of the badness of men.

Now I want to consider with you how this teaching of the Bible, whatever it is about the condition of men, has been in the past, and God has possessed being today perverted. And it is being and has been perverted in two ways. The teaching of the word of God about the actual condition of men, and thus the kind of salvation that will meet their needs and God's requirements, can be perverted and is being perverted in two different ways.

It can be and is being perverted by making the term depravity, or the condition of men, to mean more than the Bible makes it mean. We're going to consider that in a moment. It can be and is being perverted in the second place by making the condition of man mean less, or his depraved condition, making it mean less than the Bible makes it.

Either way we depart from the truth. People we call Calvinists are in great danger of making the depravity of men mean that which the Bible does not say. And people who lean to the other direction are terribly in danger of ignoring the utter extremity and awful lostness and utter depravity of sinful men.

Before I take up these two ways in which truth may be perverted, I want you to notice this very simple and apparent fact, but I think we ought to have it before us. How can the truth about man's depravity be determined? You say, Brother Barnard, are you the judge? No, sir. And you who listen or not? Well, there's what my church believes.

No, no, no, no. How can the truth about man's condition be determined? The answer is very simple. In order to determine whether anything is crooked or straight, you have to have a rule or a straight edge.

If you're going to build a house or something, you know what I'm talking about, make a rule. And you lay that rule or that straight edge down alongside the thing you're going to measure. Now, if your rule is crooked, this is important, then the thing that you compare by your rule may appear to be straight so far as that rule is concerned.

It is therefore of the utmost importance that we find the right rule or the right straight edge by which we are to judge and determine and measure the actual straightness or crookedness of man, the actual deformity or rightness of man. Do you see it now? Bless the Lord. There are two rules that can be applied, one of them as good as far as it goes.

One is the rule of moral standards of society, for society does have its moral standards called by philosophers Moore, M-O-R-E-S, by which we judge the rightness or the wrongness or the crookedness or the straightness or the deformity or the non-deformity of an object. Now, most men today, listen to me now, most men today measure up pretty well when measured by the moral standards of the day. But when we put the straight edge or the rule of the standards of Christ or Christ himself and lay that standard down alongside the best man or woman that ever lived, then we've got a different story.

And when the Bible talks about the deformed condition and the crooked condition and the misshapen condition and the depraved condition of man, it's not saying that some men don't live better lives than others. It is saying that when we lay down by the side of the life of the best of us, the Lord Jesus Christ or the standards of Christianity, that's just Christ, then all men are shown to be crooked and shown to be deformed and shown to be misshapen and shown to come short and thus that men stand in dire need of being not straightened out, not helped, but rescued, regenerated, born again, made new creations in the Lord Jesus Christ. My friends, when we speak of depravity in relation to man, we're not talking about his moral standards, which may be better or worse.

They are changeable and change from one country one day to another. But we are trying to find out what the Bible says is the truth about man when the rule of the straight edge of the standards of God in Christ are laid down beside that man. And, brother, I may be wrong on everything else, but when that's done, God knows we find that man's condition is perilous, it's desperate, and that man is utterly lost.

Now, that's so with me. That's what we need to do today. Oh, how we need this.

People say to me, Brother Barner, old Bill got saved. He quit drinking now, I know. But that isn't his trouble, not his drinking, it's himself.

And by the standards of society, that's good. If he's got to where he doesn't drink booze anymore, he doesn't do this, he doesn't do that anymore. But when we lay him up beside the Lord Jesus Christ and his teaching and his example and his requirements and his provision, we find that that man is still utterly lost and utterly ruined by the fall.

Now, by making depravity mean more than the Bible teaches, that is done in two ways. I'm not going to have time to do anything except state these and then begin next Lord's Day and teach them as best I can over this radio. We can pervert the truth of the Bible about the condition of men first in making man's inability refer to things that the Bible does not refer to.

We'll talk to you next Lord's Day about how it's easy to fall into the trap of preaching that the gospel, therefore, is to be preached to nobody but the elect. Now, that's just not so. And that man is physically unable to listen to the gospel, that's just a plain untruth.

But we'll find a deeper truth there, and I want to labor that next Lord's Day. And then we make the Bible teach what it does not teach when we make depravity concerned with the degree of badness morally of men, not as we lay the rule of Christ right slap-dab up against them. Now, I've taken time largely to introduce this subject and just say to you that I want you to stay with me.

God knows I long to do you good, not evil at all. I'm trying to face some of these things that wound us and divide the body of Christ and cheapen the gospel we preach and by which we sin against those to whom we witness. And so, Brother Barner, this time is now up, but until next Lord's Day for the message, I ask you to stand by and hear us, and may God bless you, everyone.

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