

# Are People Basically Good?

*Things That Matter Most*

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**Bible Text:** Psalm 14

**Preached on:** Sunday, June 12, 2005

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Our Scripture reading this morning is Psalm 14.

The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, They have done abominable works, There is none who does good. The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, To see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, They have together become corrupt; There is none who does good, No, not one.

Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge, Who eat up my people as they eat bread, And do not call on the LORD? There they are in great fear, For God is with the generation of the righteous. You shame the counsel of the poor, But the LORD is his refuge. Oh, that the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion! When the LORD brings back the captivity of His people, Let Jacob rejoice and Israel be glad.<sup>1</sup>

May God bless this portion of his Word.

Let's pray together.

*Oh Father, speak to us through your Word this day. Remove from our minds anything that would hinder the working of your word in our hearts. I pray especially, Father, if there be some here this day outside of Christ without hope, with no certainty of their eternal state that you will graciously open those hearts, draw those souls to saving faith. Be glorified this day, Father. Strengthen those of us who know you. Confirm us in your truth. We ask in Christ's name.*

We began a series of messages that we call, "The Things that Matter Most." There are some truths that are so important, that have such an impact on how we think and how we live that they should be reinforced from time to time.

Young people who are poised to leave home have a particular need to be firmly established in the essential truths of Scripture.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 14:1-7.

It is troubling that surveys indicate that many members of evangelical churches do not have even a rudimentary understanding of basic biblical truth.

In our first two messages we considered the foundational doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture. The doctrine we will consider today is critical to our understanding of life, our world view.

I won't ask you to raise your hands, but I wonder how many of you would agree with this statement. People are basically good.

According to researcher George Barna, 77 percent of American Christians, in general, and 74 percent of those who—as we do—attend evangelical churches, agree that people are basically good. The problem, of course, is with the tense of the verb. If the statement read, “People were basically good, people were created basically good,” we could all agree, because when we were created, we were very good.

“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good,”<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:31.

But then there was that unfortunate incident we refer to as the fall of man. The fall of man had grave consequences.

J C Ryle said, “There are few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced to unsound views about the corruption of human nature.”

Now listen to that again.

“There are few errors and false doctrines of which the beginning may not be traced to unsound views about the corruption of human nature.”

Theologians speak of the total depravity of man. The word “depravity” comes to us from the Latin language through the French: *de*, thoroughly and *probos*, crooked. Man is thoroughly crooked. He is sinful by nature in himself and he is sinful by his position before God.

Now when we say that man is totally depraved there are certain things we do not mean. We do not mean that man has no conscience. After his sin, Adam hid himself when he heard God's voice because he had a conscience. His conscience was active. Even wicked Herod had a conscience. Herod, having executed John the Baptist, his conscience greatly troubled him so that he assumed that Jesus was John. When he heard about this one out in the wilderness performing miracles and the masses coming to him, he said to himself, “It is John whom I beheaded. He has risen from the dead.”

Well, what is that? That is conscience.

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:31.

Total depravity does not mean that all men are equally bad, that all sins are equally bad. There are degrees of wickedness. There will be degrees of punishment.

Jesus said to Pilate, “He that delivered me unto you has the greater sin. You are just doing your duty as a commissioner, delegated, given this delegated authority by God. He who delivered me to you has the greater sin.”

Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for Capernaum and other cities which witnessed his miracles and did not repent.

King David lusted after Bathsheba. That was bad. He should have stopped there. But then he sent for her. That was worse. Then he committed adultery with her. That was worse.

And he should have stopped there. Then he found out that she was with child. He should have confessed his sin. He should have brought Uriah back from the front and confessed what he had done and asked his forgiveness, but he did not. He brought Uriah back to try to hide his sin. He plied Uriah with food and wine and sent him home to spend the night with his wife so he would think that the child was his. And when that didn't work because Uriah was too noble to spend the night enjoying the pleasures of his wife while his brothers were out fighting a war, David descended even deeper into sin and committed murder.

James puts it this way. “Desire, when it is conceived, gives birth to sin. Sin when it is finished brings forth death.”

There is a progression.

Our Larger Catechism puts it this way. “Some sins in themselves and by reason of several aggravations are more heinous in the sight of God than others.”

Young people, understand this. When I taught at Westminster Academy many of the kids didn't seem to get this. Some sins in themselves are more wicked, more heinous in the sight of God than others.

Kids say, “Well, if it is wrong to lust, then I might as well, you know, commit fornication. If all sin is sin. What is the difference? Some people cheat on their income tax and other people murder. It is all sin so sin is all bad. God doesn't view any one sin as worse than another.”

Yes, of course he does. Some sins are punishable by death. Some sins he calls abominations. Manasseh was described as doing more wickedness than all the kings that were before him. It is true of kings. It is true of pastors.

Total depravity does not mean that any man is necessarily as bad as he could be. There is the common grace of God who makes the sun to shine on the just and the unjust. He keeps any one of us from becoming as evil as he could be. God, by his grace, keeps you from being as evil as you could be. And before you were saved—those of you who are believers today—God kept you by his grace from becoming as evil as you could be and descending into the deepest recesses of wickedness. It is called the common grace of God.

Total depravity does not mean that we have lost the faculties necessary to make us moral agents such as reason. That is why God says, “Come now and let us reason together...Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow; Though they are read like crimson, They shall be as wool.”<sup>3</sup>

You have the capacity for reason to think.

Total depravity does not mean that man has lost the power to feel and to do many good and benevolent things for his fellow man, even unbelievers. Luke and Paul were shipwrecked on the island of Malta.

Luke says, “The natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.”<sup>4</sup> That was a good thing that they did. They were not believers. They were pagans. They hadn’t heard the gospel, but they showed kindness.

What then does total depravity mean? How would you define it?

Since the fall man is motivated and actuated by wrong principles, wrong principles. Our chief responsibility in life which is to love and to serve God is something that none of us in our natural state can do. We can’t do the chief responsible that we have, to love and serve the one who made us and put us here. We have a fatal flaw. We are motivated and actuated by wrong principles.

Theologian Dabney put it this way. “No natural man has any true love for God as a spiritual, holy, true, good and righteous sovereign. Since this is our preeminent duty, our failure here makes all our other efforts inconsequential.”

Psalm 10 puts it this way. “The wicked in his proud countenance does not seek God; God is in none of his thoughts.”<sup>5</sup>

God is in none of his thoughts and yet we are created, we are put here to glorify him, to enjoy him forever.

“Without faith it is impossible to please him.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 28:2.

<sup>5</sup> Psalm 10:4.

Are you failing in the chief purpose of your existence? If you are here today outside of Jesus Christ, if you don't know for sure that you have repented of your sins and placed your faith in Jesus Christ, if you don't know for sure that you have eternal life, you are failing in the chief purpose of your existence. You may get a job. You may get married. You may have kids. You may mow your grass, pay your taxes. But you are failing in the chief purpose for which you were created.

Man's total depravity refers to the fact that his whole personality has been affected by the fall. Sin extends to my will, my affections, my understanding, everything else. Man's whole personality has been affected by the fall. The sinner is disordered and defiled in every faculty, just as a drop of ink in a glass of water permeates and discolors all of the water.

Theologian A A Hodge points out, "The problem is not that any of our faculties are missing. The problem is the corrupt moral state of our faculties. This depravity is total in that apart from God's supernatural intervention, it is decisive. It is final. It is total."

Dabney said, "Original sin institutes a direct tendency to utter depravity. In a word it is spiritual death. Corporeal death may leave its victim more or less ghastly. A corpse may be little emaciated, still warm, still supple. It may still have a tinge of color in the cheek and a smile on its lips. It may be still precious and beautiful in the eyes of those that loved it, but it is dead and a loathsome putrefaction approaches sooner or later. It is just a matter of time."

The Westminster Confession puts it this way. "Man by his fall into a state of sin has wholly," W H O L L Y, "has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation. So as a natural man being all together averse from good and dead in sin is not able by his own strength to convert himself or to prepare himself thereunto."

Now from where do we derive this doctrine of total depravity? How do we know that man is totally depraved?

We know it from what the Scripture says, first of all, about the fall of man, Genesis two.

And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."<sup>7</sup>

Genesis 3:6.

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<sup>6</sup> Hebrews 11:6.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 2:16-17.

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”<sup>8</sup>

Now the question is: Was God just bluffing? Did he change his mind or did Adam actually die at that point?

A A Hodge says, “He died as surely as a fish taken from water, as surely as a plant taken from the earth.”

Look at Romans chapter five. Listen to verse 18.

Therefore, as through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.<sup>9</sup>

God makes it very clear that Adam acted as our representative. Adam acted as a representative of all mankind. Man’s depravity is evidenced by the circumstances of the all. Man’s depravity is evidenced by what the Scripture declares to be our present moral condition.

Listen to some of what the Scripture says about our present moral condition. Every man by nature is a child of wrath, Ephesians 2:3; a child of the devil, Matthew 13:38 and John 8:44; he drinks iniquity like water, Job 15:16; he is depraved in mind, Ephesians 4:17; blinded in heart, Ephesians 4:18; he cannot hear the words of Christ, John 8:43; cannot know the things of God, 1 Corinthians 2:14; cannot please God, Romans 8:8; he is a slave to Satan, 2 Timothy 2:26; servant of sin, Romans 6:20; without strength, 5:6; shapen in iniquity, Psalm 51:5; alienated from the life of God, Ephesians 4:18.

And listen to what God says in Ephesians chapter two, a passage that should put it beyond all doubt.

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.<sup>10</sup>

The sinner is beyond the reach of cultivation.

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 3:6.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 5:18-19.

<sup>10</sup> Ephesians 2:1-3.

“There is none righteous, no, not one.”<sup>11</sup>

You cannot cultivate a rotten apple into a good one.

He is beyond the reach of education.

“There is none that understandeth.”<sup>12</sup>

He is beyond the reach of inspiration.

“There is none that seeks after God.”<sup>13</sup>

Inspiring moving and preaching, apart from the power of the Holy Spirit means nothing.

He is beyond the reach of occupation.

“There is none that doeth good, no not one.”<sup>14</sup>

Inviting him to sing in the choir, inducting him into an office in the church will not make him a lover of God.

Quoting from Robert Beck in his little book *The Five Points of Calvinism*.

Thirdly, man’s depravity is evidenced by the Scripture teaching concerning the necessity of regeneration. The Scripture says you must be born again.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “ Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”<sup>15</sup>

The Scripture teaches that regeneration is an absolute necessity.

Why? Why do we have to be born again? Because we are dead spiritually, because our first birth we inherited from Adam this sinful nature. We need to be born again.

2 Corinthians 5:17.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”<sup>16</sup>

1 John 2:29.

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<sup>11</sup> Romans 3:10.

<sup>12</sup> Romans 3:11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 3:12.

<sup>15</sup> John 3:3.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:17.

“If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.”<sup>17</sup>

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God,”<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 1:23.

You see, if we were not totally depraved we would not need to experience the new birth.

Man’s depravity is evidenced by the teaching of Christ. Look at John chapter eight or listen as I read a couple of verses from John chapter eight verse 42.

“Jesus said to them,”<sup>19</sup> to the Jews that were confronting him.

If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.<sup>20</sup>

Why can’t you do what I said? You can’t even understand what I am saying.

“A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit,”<sup>21</sup> is the way Jesus put it elsewhere.

One class of men is governed by one set of basic principles. The other class is governed by another set of basic principles. The regenerated, the unregenerated.

Now there are certain objections that are always raised to this doctrine or frequently raised to it when it is brought out.

First of all, we all know non Christians who demonstrate love and generosity and kindness. Can we say that they are totally depraved? Are all their actions motivated by selfishness?

Theologian Dabney says, “Far be it from us to assert that all the charities of domestic love—parent and children, children and parent—all the nobleness of friendship among the worldly are selfishness in disguise.”

We are not saying that.

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<sup>17</sup> 1 John 2:29.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Peter 1:23.

<sup>19</sup> John 8:42.

<sup>20</sup> John 8:42-44.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 7:18.



Lorraine Boettner puts it this way. “The unregenerate man can, though common grace, love his family. And he may be a good citizen. He may give a million dollars to build a hospital, but he cannot give even a cup of water to a disciple in the name of Jesus. If he is a drunkard he may abstain from drink for utilitarian purposes, but he cannot do it out of love for God. All of his common virtues or good works have a fatal defect in that his motives which prompt them are not to glorify God, a defect so vital that it throws any element of goodness as to man wholly into the shade.”

And get this. “It matters not how good the works may be in themselves. For so long as the doer of them is out of harmony with God, none of his works are spiritually acceptable.”

Furthermore, the good works of the unregenerate have no stable foundation for his nature is still unchanged and as naturally and as certainly as the washed sow returns to her wallowing in the mire, so he sooner or later returns to his evil ways.

I like to illustrate it with pirates. I have done this with several classes I taught.

Pirate.

Let’s say that I will be the captain since I am up here. All right. I am the captain on a ship and, you know, I have got a hook here or here. I am a pirate. And we have rebelled against the British government, let’s say. We are pirates, you know. We have taken over a ship and we have thrown off our allegiance to the British Empire and we are pirates. Now that is how we live. We are pirates. I am a pirate.

So you get the idea, a pirate.

But, you know, we are not bad pirates. I mean, we have certain rules. You know, you can’t steal another man’s—what do they call it—grub or grog. You can’t take someone else’s grog, you know? You can’t steal other people’s pieces of eight. You know, we have got certain rules on our ship. We have got certain standards.

There will be no swearing on my pirate ship, you know? No stealing from other pirates.

And we might have some nice rules and regulations and on the whole as pirates go, we may be exceptional pirates. But as far as the British government is concerned, we are mutineers. We are pirates. We are rebels. And if we are caught we are going to be hung.

Now, there are people who know not God, who don’t love God, who don’t serve God, who don’t know why they are here or where they are headed and they do some nice things and they may keep the golden rule as I tried to do as an unsaved child. And I tried to keep the 10 Commandments. I didn’t know what they all meant. I remember walking along as a child and I would see ants on the sidewalk and I would try to be careful not to step on the ants because I knew God said, “Don’t kill.” And nobody explained to me,

well, they are talking about people, you know, humans. Thou shalt not murder is what the passage really means.

Well, I didn't know that as a kid. I was just trying to do good things. I was trying to please God insofar as I understood what he wanted.

But I didn't know him in a personal way. I didn't have a relationship with him. I couldn't really love him.

If we are all totally depraved, you might ask, why is the world not in much worse shape than it is? You know, why don't we have terrorist bombings in America every day? Why isn't the world not in worse shape than it is? Why don't we have people abducted every hour from every home and...

You know what I am saying. Why isn't it much worse than that?

It is because of the common grace of God.

We live in a lost world, a world which if left to itself would fester in its corruption from eternity to eternity, a world reeking with iniquity and blasphemy. The effects of the fall are such that man's will in itself tends only downward to acts of sin and folly.

As a matter of fact, God does not permit the race to become as corrupt as it naturally would if left to itself. He exercises restraining influences inciting men to love one another, to be honest, to be philanthropic. You and I are enjoying the benefits of a society that was based upon the Word of God. And people still have some vague recollection that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

And so people walk around and they say, "Well, you know, I am not comfortable with men marrying men. I don't know exactly why, but it makes me uncomfortable."

They don't necessarily know that God said that it is an abomination. But they know it makes them uncomfortable.

"And so we enjoy, as citizens, the benefits of that foundation. Unless God exercised these influences, wicked men would become worse and worse, overlapping conventions and social barriers until the very zenith of lawlessness would soon be reached and the earth would become so utterly corrupt that the elect could not live on it," again, quoting for Lorraine Boetner, a theologian.

"He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way."<sup>22</sup>

"Ye are the salt of the earth."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> 2 Thessalonians 2:7.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:13.

“You are the light of the world.”<sup>24</sup>

We are salt and that helps to preserve society. What would America be like tomorrow if all the Christians were gone today? What would this world be like if all the influences of God’s Spirit were taken away?

Somebody says, “Well, you know, it wasn’t fair that Adam represented us. Why should Adam represent me?”

Listen. The principle of representation is a familiar one for us. Even today parents, to a large extent, affect the destiny of their children. If your mother and father are wise and virtuous and thrifty on the one hand, or if they are immoral on the other hand, that affects your destiny, doesn’t it?

As a fair probation could not in the nature of the case be given to every new member in person as it comes into existence an undeveloped infant, God as guardian of the race and for his best interest gave all its members a trial in the person of Adam under the most favorable of circumstances, making him for that end the representative and personal substitute of each one of his natural descendants.

But the best answer is the judge of all the earth will do right.

God saw that it was a fair and just probation.

It is Adam who had the best of all possible worlds and had a relationship with God. If Adam with all of the blessings that God had bestowed upon him and this gorgeous garden in which he lived in fellowship with God, created to be good, if Adam sinned against God, it is a sure bet that I would have done it had I been in his sandals or whatever he wore.

Christopher Nest, “God did enough making man upright and if he has lost his uprightness he must thank himself and not blame God who is not bound to restore it. Grace is the Lord’s. He gives it to whom he will.”

But then, of course, if you are a thinking person you reason to the next step. Why would God create a universe in which it was possible for man to sin and by his sin bring such misery to so many through sickness and war and famine and death, et cetera?

That is an answer the Bible simply does not give us.

C S Lewis took a stab at answering it in *Mere Christianity* and some of what he says may be helpful. He said, “God created things which had free will. That means creatures which can go either wrong or right. Some people think they can imagine a creature which was free, but had no possibility of going wrong. I cannot. If a thing is free to be good, it is also free to be bad. And free will is what has made evil possible. Why then did God give

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew 5:14.

them free will? Because free will, though it makes evil possible, is also the only thing that makes possible any love or goodness or joy worth having. A world of automatons, creatures that work like machines would hardly be worth creating. 'I love you, God. Thank you for creating me.' The happiness which God designs for his higher creatures is the happiness of being freely, voluntarily united to him and to each other in an ecstasy of love and delight compared with which the most rapturous love between a man and a woman on this earth is mere milk and water. And for that they must be free."

Of course, God knew what would happen if they used their freedom the wrong way. Apparently he thought it worth the risk. Perhaps we feel inclined to disagree with him, but there is a difficulty about disagreeing with God. He is the source from which all your reasoning power comes. You could not be right and he be wrong any more than a stream can rise higher than its own source. When you are arguing against him, you are arguing against the very power that makes you able to argue at all. It is like cutting off the branch you are sitting on.

If God thinks this state of war in the universe the price worth paying for free will, that is for making a live world in which creature can do real good or harm and something of real importance can happen instead of toy world which only moves when he pulls the strings, then we may take it. It is worth paying.

God created Adam and Eve and he gave them this freedom. Since that terrible tragedy in the garden, you and I have been bound. I am no longer free to just love God, not in my own nature.

Let me talk about that for a moment.

What about this free will that Lewis spoke of? Is not fallen man still free to seek God, please God, love God and serve God? Am I not in my fallen state free to love God and serve God?

In a sense, yes, of course I am still free to do that.

Let me illustrate.

How many of you here have a dog at home? All right, lots of dogs, several dogs. I have met some of your dogs, very nice, seem very nice, left all my fingers.

Now you have a dog. You probably have forbidden your dog to do certain things. You probably don't permit him to chew table legs, maybe sleep on the sofa, bring dead animals into the living room.

But has anyone here ever forbidden your dog from making long distance phone calls? Anybody? Or receiving faxes? Playing too many video games? Taking too many showers? Using up all the hot water? Playing the stereo too loud?

The fact is, think about it, your dog is free to do all those things. He simply [?] right now.

You know, he is on the phone to the Alaska dog and some Iditarod dog. You don't know. He is free to do them, but you are confident that he will not do them. Why? Because those things are contrary to his nature. He is unable to do that.

[?] He is not able to do that.

We put fences around the cow pasture. We don't put any nets over the cow pasture. Those cows are free to fly away. They are unable to do it. It is contrary to their nature.

You are free to love God as a natural man or woman, of course you are. Love him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. The trouble is you can't. You love darkness rather than light because your deeds are evil. It is contrary to your nature.

The natural man cannot love God, serve God, seek God, please God because those things are contrary to his nature.

“You will not come to me that you might have life.”

Your will is controlled by your nature. You will not come because of your nature. You don't want to come in your natural state.

The consequences of this truth. Think about it. IF this is true and this is true, this is God's holy Word. If this is true, if we are totally depraved then in your natural state, you, if left in that natural state [?] all hope.

“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”<sup>25</sup>

Nature can no more cast out nature than Satan can cast out Satan. In your natural state you are, would be without hope.

Secondly, salvation must then be all of God, wholly by his grace.

Think about it. If I am utterly depraved, unable to love God, unable to please God in my natural state and if some day I actually love God and serve God, then that salvation that has been wrought in me must be the work of someone other than me.

If this is true, we would expect the Scripture to declare that we are saved not on the basis of what we do, but on the basis of what God does for us. And that is precisely what the Scripture does say.

“So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Romans 3:23.

It is “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”<sup>27</sup>

“No one comes to the Father,” Jesus said, “except through Me.”<sup>28</sup>

And unless the father draw him.

“...that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls).”<sup>29</sup>

Thirdly, God is not obligated to save any of us. Underscore that. Even those who die as infants or those who die before reaching what men have called the age of accountability. God is not obligated to save any of us. We have already sinned in the person of our substitute, Adam, our representative. We are already condemned. We are members of a condemned race.

Now we have reason to hope that God will graciously save those who die in infancy, those mentally incapable of comprehending the gospel, but he is not obligated to do so anymore than he is obligated to save all those who have never heard the name of Jesus.

The missionary enterprise of Christians is based on the belief that mankind is depraved and already condemned. And no man comes to the Father but by Jesus.

“Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”<sup>30</sup>

That is why Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”<sup>31</sup>

Now, finally the effect this truth should have upon us.

First of all, it should put to silence all boasting. It should put to silence all boasting. Put an end to all pride.

Who am I? I am a depraved sinner who deserves judgment. That is who I am. Every breath is a gift from God. Every day is an undeserved blessing. Everything this side of hell is grace.

When you think about it it should also put a silence to all complaining. You know, [?]. It

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<sup>26</sup> Romans 9:16.

<sup>27</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>28</sup> John 14:6.

<sup>29</sup> Romans 9:11.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 4:12.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 16:15.

should put to silence all complaining. We are on this earth. [?] Life, comfort, blessings of family and friends, the air conditioning.

...should send us fleeing to Christ for mercy. This truth should send us fleeing to Christ for mercy.

You mean to tell me there is a way of forgiveness, there is a way of life? Are you saying to me, God, that though my sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they should be as wool? You are telling me that though I rebelled against you, though I am a member of a fallen race, you are going to forgive me, you are offering me life? You are saying I can be restored into a relationship with you, all my sins can be forgiven and I can receive everlasting life? Not only will I not be punished in hell for my sins, but you are promising me pleasures forevermore at thy right hand? Fullness of joy in thy presence?

And Jesus did it all? All to him I owe? Is that what you are telling me God?

Yes. That is what he is telling us. This doctrine should cause us to flee to Christ for mercy.

And you might be thinking, “Yeah, but if you really believe men are dead in sins and incapable of loving God, why bother, why preach, why evangelize?”

Because it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

God uses the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. That is why we evangelize. That is why we get the gospel out. There is a power in the Word of God.

You heard about the guy who sent his New Testament off to be rebound, you know, because the pages were falling out. And it came back and the binder, printer didn't have enough room to write “The New Testament” so he just put the initials, “TNT.”

There is a power in the Word of God. It changes hearts. It changes lives.

“So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”<sup>32</sup>

God miraculously, mysteriously recreates us. We are born again of an incorruptible seed, the Word of God.

I have experienced such a birth. I still remember very clearly when it happened to me. Many of you here can very clearly remember when it happened to you. But, lady, if you are here today outside of Christ, if you are here today and you have never yet repented of your sins and put your faith in Christ, young person, man, if you are here today outside of Christ, if you have never... if you can never look back, if you cannot look back at a point in your life when you got down on your knees and you cried out to God and said, “God,

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<sup>32</sup> Romans 10:17.

be merciful to me a sinner save me. Jesus died on the cross. I believe that he took my place. I believe that he paid my debt. I want him as my Savior,” if you have never come to God that way, cry out to God and ask his forgiveness and his mercy. You can do it right now. Now is the day of salvation. Now is the accepted time.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,” Jesus said, “and I will give you rest.”<sup>33</sup>

When are you coming?

You cannot come unless he does a work in your heart. But you don't know about that. All you know is he is calling you to come.

We know the Bible says if you do come it is his grace. But what he asks you to do is to come. Cry out to him, “God forgive me and save me. Give me this new life the Bible talks about. Make me a new creature. Regenerate me.”

Will you come to him today?

Let's pray.

*Father, drive home these truths to our hearts, Lord. However good we may think of ourselves, whatever good things we may have done, oh Lord, show us that they are still tainted by sin. There is pride and selfishness. We have hatred and animosity. Show us the weakness within, Lord, that we might see the beauty of Christ, that we might feel a need for him. Draw souls to saving faith we pray we ask it in Christ's precious name. Amen.*

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<sup>33</sup> Matthew 11:28.