

## 1. Two Pillars of the Gospel

- a. There are many doctrines that are fundamental to the Christian Faith. But when it comes to unpacking the doctrine of salvation (Soteriology), two doctrines rise above the rest as foundational to getting the gospel right. The Doctrine of God (Theology Proper) and the doctrine of Man (Anthropology) are the starting point from which all other teachings related to salvation must flow out from. To get either of these doctrines wrong will always result in a twisted and difunctional gospel, or at worst outright heresy.
- b. The doctrine of God teaches us that God is sovereign over all of His creation. That He unchangeable, immense, eternal, incomprehensible, almighty, in every way infinite, absolutely holy, perfectly wise, wholly free, completely absolute. That He works all things according to the counsel of his own unchangeable and completely righteous will for his own glory. It teaches us that He is most loving, gracious, merciful, and patient. That He overflows with goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin.<sup>1</sup>
- c. The doctrine of man teaches us that we were created in the image of God for the purpose of bringing Him glory. That our greatest grandfather Adam sin against God, and so he fell bringing the curse of death on him and all his descendance after him. This death was first of all spiritual rendering all humans being enemies of their Creator, slaves of sin and children of the devil. Second this death was realized physically, guaranteeing that every person will die and stand before God to give an account of their sin and be given the just punishment for their treachery.

## 2. Some Historical Positions

- a. Throughout Church history a variety of views have been argued and debated over. Pelagianism, Semi Pelagianism and Total Depravity could be a summary of the debated positions.
  - Pelagianism teaches that people have the ability to fulfill the commands of God by exercising the freedom of human will apart from the grace of God. In other words, a person's free will is totally capable of choosing God and/or to do good or bad without the aid of Divine intervention. Pelagianism teaches that man's nature is basically good. Therefore, it

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<sup>1</sup> LBCF Chapter 2:1

denies original sin, the doctrine that we have inherited a sinful nature from Adam.<sup>2</sup>

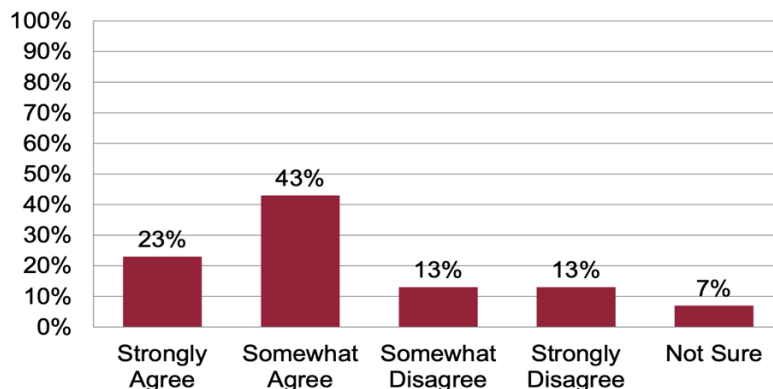
- Semi-Pelagianism (advocated by Cassian at Marseilles, 5th Century) did not deny original sin and its effects upon the human soul and will; but, it taught that God and man cooperate to achieve man's salvation. This cooperation is not by human effort as in keeping the law but rather in the ability of a person to make a free-will choice. The semi-Pelagian teaches that man can make the first move toward God by seeking God out of his own free will, and that man can cooperate with God's grace even to the keeping of his faith through human effort.<sup>3</sup>
- Total depravity teaches that mankind, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto. <sup>4</sup>

➤ Romans 3:10-18, 8:8, Ephesians 2:1,

### 3. Implications of an unbiblical Anthropology

- a. When Christians cease having a biblical world view of humanity everything is affected. Our parenting, our evangelism, how we read the daily headlines and even how we pray, will take on a less than biblical approach when we fail to submit to what the scripture teaches about the fallenness of all people.

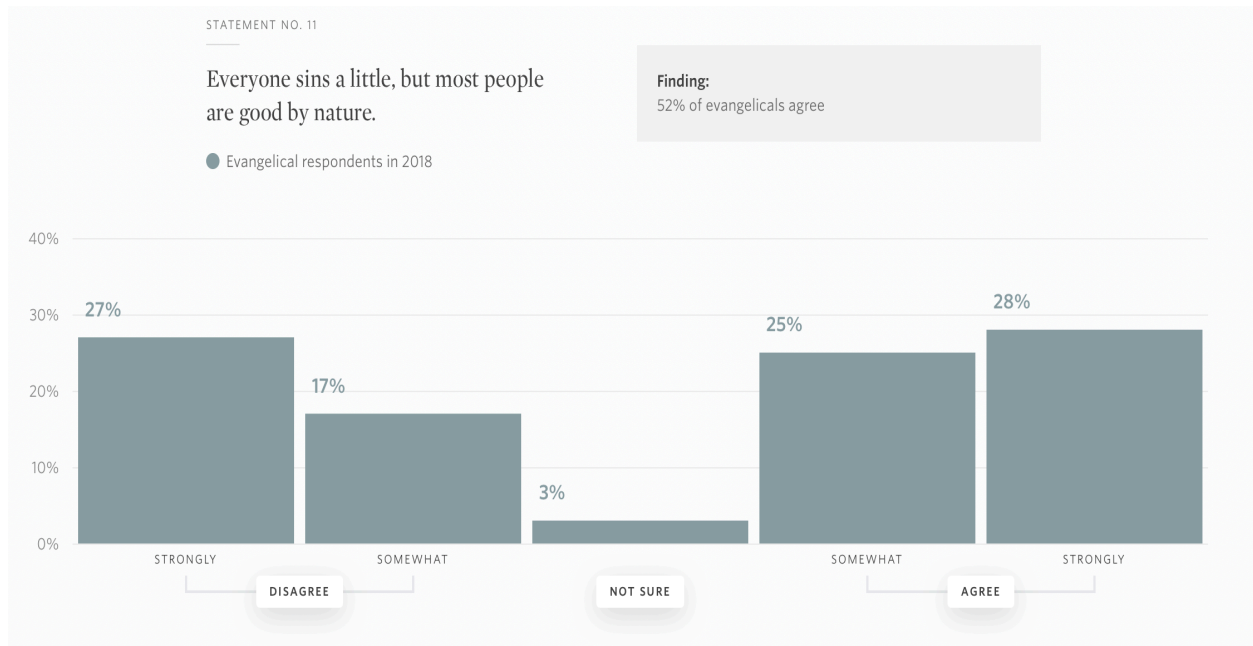
**Everyone sins a little, but most people are good by nature.**



<sup>2</sup> <https://carm.org/pelagianism>

<sup>3</sup> <https://carm.org/semi-pelagianism>

<sup>4</sup> LBCF Chapter 9:



#### 4. The Doctrine of Total Depravity

a. *Definition: Mankind, by his fall into a state of sin, has wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able by his own strength to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.*

- Many have objected to the term “Total Depravity”. But it needs to be noted that the term does not mean that all humans are as bad as they could be. Rather, that sin has touched every aspect of our beings.
- “total inability,” “righteous incapability,” “radical corruption”, “radical depravity”, ‘pervasive depravity”, “moral inability.”

#### Original Sin

- It’s worth noting that the doctrine of Original sin and the doctrine of Total Depravity are not the same thing, although they are closely related. Original sin is “A term referring to the universal defect in human nature **caused by the fall, entailing the loss of original righteousness and the distortion of the image of God.”<sup>5</sup> Total Depravity is the outworking of that Original Sin**

<sup>5</sup> Barry, John D., David Bomar, Derek R. Brown, Rachel Klippenstein, Douglas Mangum, Carrie Sinclair Wolcott, Lazarus Wentz, Elliot Ritzema, and Wendy Widder, eds. *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016.

➤ Romans 5:12,18 Psalm 51:5

- 1 John 3:4 (ESV) Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; **sin is lawlessness.**

## b. Extent and Depth of Depravity

- Scripture teaches with absolute clarity that every aspect of our person has been affected by the fall. Mind, body and soul are broken and no longer function the way God originally designed them too.
- Genesis 6:5 (ESV) The Lord saw that the wickedness of man (mankind) was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
  - The word “man” in this verse does not mean just one man or only males unparticular, but every man woman and child. The NET translates this verse “mankind”. The entire human populous is in view.
  - Two sets of three show us to what extent wickedness and evil are present and active in mankind. First their “intention” (actions or deeds), “thoughts” (mind and intellect) and “heart” (desire and will) are mentioned. Secondly three other words bring even more weight, “every” thought, intention and desire was “only” evil and wicked “continually”. To look at it another way, there was not a spec or a trace of goodness and righteousness in anyone. This is the condition of fallen humanity.
- Romans 3:11–18 (ESV) no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.” “Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known.” “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”
  - A careful reading of these eight verses shows us a similar outcome as we saw in Genesis 6:5 but with some added detail. Again, we are shown the universality of humanities unrighteous. Man, woman and

child have all become “worthless”<sup>6</sup>. Once again the mind, will and actions of mankind are addressed, but going further, the very part our bodies that is meant to bless and praise our creator has become an instrument of cursing and bitterness.

- Matthew 12:34 For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.
- Mark 7:21–23 For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, <sup>22</sup> coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. <sup>23</sup> All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”
- More verses describing our depravity: the venom of cobras within us (Job 20:14), putrefying sores oozing pus (Isaiah 1:5–6), gangrene (2 Timothy 2:17), a menstrual cloth (Isaiah 3:22; 64:6; Lamentations 1:17), mud and dog’s vomit (2 Peter 2:22), and scum and filthiness in a boiling pot (Ezekiel 29:11–12), a worm (Psalm 22:6)

### c. The Bondage of the Will

- The pervasiveness of sin in all humans is crystal clear within the pages of scripture as we have seen. But as we learned earlier, some would try and argue that man is still able to make that initial step toward choosing or calling out for Gods grace. We will see that scripture holds no such teaching, and that mankind in our fallen state is a morally spiritually dead slave, incapable of choosing or even desiring Gods mercy and grace. Without regeneration we are “children of the devil”.
- Mankind is spiritual dead:
  - Genesis 2:17 but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it dying you shall die.
  - Ephesians 2:1–3 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup> 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 <sup>3</sup> 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. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,

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<sup>6</sup> Or “useless” the image of God is so twisted and broken that it cannot function in the way for which it was originally intended.

even when we were **dead** in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

➔ Notice what this spiritual deadness produces. We were (speaking to regenerate Christians) followers of the world and the devil, not followers of God. Living in the fleshly passions of our depraved mind and body. Notice in verse 4 how Paul contrasts being dead with being alive and saved. There is no partial deadness or state of being slightly revived. There is only death and life, child of wrath or saved by grace.

➤ Colossians 2:13 **And you, who were **dead** in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses,**

- Mankind is a slave to sin:

➤ Scripture also describes the fallen state as slavery and bondage. This word picture speaks strongly against any kind of moral or spiritual neutrality. Slavery is captivity. Paul again bears this out in the book of Romans, making the case that all humanity is either a slave to sin or a slave to righteousness. There is no middle ground.

➤ Romans 6:16–18 <sup>6</sup> **Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient **slaves**, you are **slaves** of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? <sup>17</sup> But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, <sup>18</sup> and, having been set free from sin, **have become slaves of righteousness.****

➤ Romans 7:14 **For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into **bondage** to sin.**

- Mankind is incapable of choosing God:

➤ The scriptures description of humanities deadness and slavery to sin is reinforced and solidified by its unapologetic statements of incapability. All people in their natural fallen state are morally unable of choosing God or doing anything at all that would please him.

- John 6:44 **No one can come** to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day.
- John 6:65 And he said, “This is why I told you that **no one can come** to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”
- John 1:12–13 But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh **nor of the will of man,** but of God.
- 1 Corinthians 2:14 The natural person **does not accept** the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and **he is not able** to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
- Romans 8:8 Those who are in the flesh **cannot please God.**
- Simply put, people will not, on their own initiative choose to come to God. Why? Because their will and affections, all of their desires are wholly bent in on themselves. Jesus taught this clearly in John 3:19 where he said **“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil.”**

## 5. Two common Objections

- a. If God made man unable to chooses him, how can he hold them responsible?
  - Answer 1: God made man upright and good, (Gen 1:31, Eccles 7:29) man choose to rebel even after he was warned, and so incurred the just penalty for that sin. God is under no obligation to lower his perfect standard because men chose to disobey it.
  - Answer 2: It is important to distinguish between moral inability and physical inability. Man’s mental phacelias, although touched by sin, are still intact. Man is able to learn, reason and understand things. The problem is his will and desires. Man hates God and loves himself. For this reason he will never will to use his mind or to follow God, he is morally bent in on himself and away from spiritual good.

b. How can you say no one does good? I have seen lots of people do good things.

- Answer: We must remember that when we read the scripture it is God speaking. When God declares that “no one does good” He is saying it from His perfectly righteous perspective. From God’s perspective no one in their fallen condition does any good. Why? Because they cannot will to do it for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31) and they cannot do it by faith (Heb 11:6, Rom 14:23). This is why the scripiter says in Isaiah 64:6 (NET) We are all like one who is unclean, all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight.

## 6. By grace alone (Sola Gratia) “but God”

- Romans 5:8 **but God** shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- Romans 9:16 (ESV) So then it depends not on human will or exertion, **but on God**, who has mercy.
- John 1:13 (ESV) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, **but of God.**
- Titus 3:4–7 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> **But when the goodness and loving kindness of God** our Savior appeared, <sup>5</sup> he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, <sup>6</sup> whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, <sup>7</sup> so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.
- Ephesians 2:4–5 (ESV) <sup>4</sup> **But God**, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
- 1 Corinthians 1:27–31 (ESV) <sup>27</sup> **But God chose** what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, **boast in the Lord.**”



