

Total Depravity (1:28)

1:28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper...

God’s Not Worthy

- “Could it be imagined that rational creatures should hate the chief good, and depending creatures abhor the fountain of their being.”¹

God Gave Them Over

- This is the third “*God gave them over*” (1:24,26,28).
- “A man cannot be delivered up to a greater slavery than to be given up to his own lusts.”² Similarly: “God, according to Romans 1, lets people have what they most want...hell is God giving you the life you want, on into eternity...people go to hell because they want to be away from God...hell is separation from God.”³ If God Himself is the Source of all good (James 1:17), and hell is separation from God (2 Thessalonians 1:8), then hell is separation from all good.

A Depraved Mind and Improper Behavior

- All things are known only as God is known, not because “God is everything,” but because He is the Creator of all things and all things tell of “*His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature*” (Romans 1:20). When human beings “*suppress the truth in unrighteousness*” (1:18), they miss the point of creation – everything.

- When Paul speaks of “*a depraved mind*,” he’s not just speaking of moral depravity, but a “mind judicially blinded, so as not to discern the difference between things distinguished even by the light of nature.”⁴ READ Isaiah 5:20; Malachi 2:17 (sadly, these verses are spoken of a people who claim to belong to God!).

Unrighteousness Looks Like This (1:29-31)

1:29...being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 1:30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 1:31without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful...

The Vice List

- Paul frequently uses “vice lists” to describe human sin.⁵
- The title of the list is “*filled with all unrighteousness*.” Everything in the list after this further describes “*all unrighteousness*.”
- “...*being filled with all unrighteousness*” Remember, “*unrighteousness*” is the target of God’s wrath from heaven (1:18): The only way to be saved from this right wrath against “*unrighteousness*” is through faith in Jesus Christ: “...*we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him*” (Romans 5:9).

The Big Lie

- What is our heart and mind concerning lists like this? Unbelievers reject this list out-of-hand – one of the biggest lies in the world is that human beings are all inherently “good.” Sadly, though, many believers want to side with the unbelieving world on this. You and I, as believers, need to own this list. When we

¹ Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

² Ibid.

³ Timothy Keller (b. 1950), *The Reason for God Discussion Guide: Conversations on Faith and Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 84.

⁴ Robert Haldane (1764-1842), *Exposition of Romans*.

⁵ 1 Corinthians 5:10,11; 6:9,10; 2 Corinthians 12:20; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 4:31; 5:3-5; Colossians 3:5,8; 1 Timothy 1:9,10; 6:4,5; 2 Timothy 3:2-4; Titus 3:3.

compromise on the depravity of humanity, we lessen our view of God’s holiness, judgment, and the need of the salvation provided solely in Jesus Christ. Embrace the Bible’s clear teaching concerning the fallen-ness of humanity (including yourself prior to salvation in Christ). Do not compromise on it.

Notes on the Vice List

- Here’s a possible organizational outline for this vice list:
 - “*Filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil...*” I would regard this, especially the phrase “*filled with all unrighteousness,*” as the title of the list. This whole discussion started with “*unrighteousness*” in 1:18. This is a summary, followed by some specific examples. The entire list is not comprehensive.
 - “*...full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice...*” The beginning of this list, “*full of,*” tells us that these are thoughts, feelings, or motivations – they are not necessarily acted out.⁶
 - “*...they are gossips, slanderers...*” These are sins committed by the tongue against our fellow man. READ James 2:2-12.
 - “*...haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents...*” These are sins of rebellion against any authority, be it God or moral/ethical systems, or parents. Hating God is discussed in the Second Commandment.⁷ “*...disobedient to*

parents” is a violation of the Fifth Commandment (Exodus 20:12// Deuteronomy 5:16).⁸

- “*...without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful...*” All of these words begin with what’s called the “*α* privative,” or words which describe what is lacking.
- “*...greed*” is the sin forbidden in the Tenth Commandment. It is a passion for “more.” It also leads us to a violation of what Jesus calls the second-greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39// Mark 12:31//Luke 10:27), and the command the apostles call a summation of the Law (Romans 13:9; James 2:8), “*you shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Leviticus 19:18). We usually desire what we see our neighbor having (even if our “*neighbor*” is someone we see on television or the internet). The condemnation “*full of envy*” follows, describing not just a desire for what someone else has, but a resentment that they have it at all!
- “*...murder*” (φονος) follows “*full of envy*” (φθονος) since the two words sound alike in the original Greek, but also because they are connected in the first murder ever committed: READ 1 John 3:11,12. God had accepted Abel’s sacrifice, but not Cain’s – Cain therefore envied his brother’s acceptance and gave in to the sinful temptation that made him the world’s first murderer (Genesis 4:1-8). Remember, too, that Jesus tells us hatred in our hearts is equivalent to murder (Matthew 5:21,22; see also James 4:1-12).

⁶ Especially think about Jesus’ words concerning murder in Matthew 5:21-26.

⁷ Exodus 20:5//Deuteronomy 5:9. See also Numbers 10:35; Deuteronomy 7:10; 32:41; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Psalm 68:1; 81:15; 139:21; Proverbs 8:36. Without the Holy Spirit, our minds are “*hostile toward God*” (Romans 8:5-8).

⁸ Remember that last week we examined what a life looks like which is obedient to the command “*be filled with the Spirit*” (Ephesians 5:18b). While we looked at the life of a Spirit-filled congregation (5:19-21) and a Spirit-filled marriage (5:22-33), Paul brings the Fifth Commandment to bear in describing how Spirit-filled children behave: READ Ephesians 6:1-3.

- “...deceit” will come up again when Paul builds a case for the guilty of all humanity: “...we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written [in Psalm 5:9], ‘...their throat is an open grave, with their tongues they keep on deceiving’” (3:9,10,13).
- We should not see “them” in this list, but “us.” We are all guilty and need “the gospel,” which “is the power of salvation to everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

Embracing the Curse (1:32)

1:32...and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

They Know

- This is Paul’s second accusation about what lost humanity knows: READ Romans 1:18,19. Remember what the root guilt of humanity is: “...even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks” (Romans 1:21).

Worthy of Death

- We have all violated God’s Law, and are all therefore guilty (James 2:8).
- For more on the eternal death penalty, READ Ezekiel 18:4,20; Romans 5:12; 6:23; James 1:15; Revelation 21:8.

The Greatest Depth

- Consider the testimony of other teachers concerning this greatest depth of sin:
 - “...it is the summit of all evils, when the sinner is so void of shame that he is pleased with his own vices, will not bear them to be reproved, and also cherishes them in others by his consent and approbation.”⁹

⁹ John Calvin (1509-1564).

- “This is the lowest point of degradation. To sin, even in the heat of passion, is evil; but to delight in the sins of others, shows that men are of set purpose and fixed preference, wicked.”¹⁰
- “The most damning condition is not the practice of iniquity, however much that may evidence our abandonment of God and abandonment to sin; it is that together with the practice there is also the support and encouragement of others in the practice of the same. To put it bluntly, we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation. We hate others as we hate ourselves and render therefore to them the approval of what we know merits damnation.”¹¹
- “They who encourage others to pursue evil commit a greater evil in that they foment the spread of evil and are complicit in the destruction of others.”¹²

The Gospel at the Beginning of the Book

- Since the original death sentence against sin is, I believe, foundational to humanity’s awareness of their plight, it seems helpful to go back to the beginning to examine the source of our sin and God’s grace in our sin.¹³

¹⁰ Charles Hodge (1797-1878), *A Commentary on Romans*.

¹¹ John Murray (1898-1975), *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1959), 52-53.

¹² Thomas Schreiner (b. 1954), *Romans* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1998), 100.

¹³ The longer I live in Christ, the more and more I am convinced that a right understanding of the Bible and the world in which we live comes from a serious engagement with the first three chapters of the Bible. Everything that comes after these events (including everything

The Commandment and Punishment

- READ Genesis 2:15-17.

The Lie and Acceptance of the Lie

- READ Genesis 3:1-6.
- Even though Eve knew God and His *“ordinance...that those who practice such things are worthy of death,”* she bought the serpent’s lie and made the decision to evaluate God’s Word and its truth on her own. She then decided to choose her own evaluation (she *“saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise,”* 3:6) over God’s Law. This is exactly what we see in Romans 1:32. Even though humanity (sons and daughters of Eve, all of us) knows *“the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death,”* we do it anyway. This is ultimately the root of the statement *“they exchanged the truth of God for a lie”* (Romans 1:25).

Gospel Promise

- READ Genesis 3:15.

Punishment

- READ Genesis 3:19.

Grace and Mercy

- Grace and faith are present in the story of humanity’s fall into sin:
 - READ Genesis 3:20. Adam had just been sentenced to mortality in 3:19; either he is ignoring God’s statement in the following verse by the naming of his wife, or he is naming her by faith in the promise of 3:15. I believe his naming of Eve is a statement of faith in the promise

- of the serpent-crushing Seed, Jesus Christ.
- *“The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife, and clothed them”* (Genesis 3:21). Prior to sin, *“the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed”* (2:25). After violating God’s commandment, *“the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked”* (3:7a). They *“sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings”* (3:7b), and *“hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden”* (3:8). Their physical nakedness mirrored a spiritual exposure as guilty before God. Their own coverings were inadequate, just as our own attempts to cover our sins with lies or “good deeds” are futile before God. God Himself made coverings for them by the first sacrifice – the first symbol pointing to Christ’s sacrifice.
- READ Genesis 3:22-24. Humanity is turnout out of the garden. The garden (like the land of Israel in the old covenant and the church in the new covenant) is a place of covenant fellowship with God and covenant blessing. When they break covenant, they are rejected from that place. Revelation 21-22 shows us returning to new Jerusalem, which sounds a lot like a garden.

in your life) until the end of time are made understandable and coherent by these three chapters!

“Embracing Death” from Romans 1:28-32 (NASB)
Pastor Michael Head – Indian Hills Baptist Church, Silver City, NM
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“...the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

“Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (Acts 2:28).

Do you have the freely-given and only Remedy for the penalty of eternal spiritual death?