

T.U.L.I.P*

(The Doctrines of Sovereign Grace)

Total Depravity

Last night, a gas station was robbed. The night before, a fight broke out downtown and someone was shot. And the night before that, there was a story on the news about a case of domestic violence. It seems that *every* time you sit down to watch the news, there's something bad being reported. Oh, there are "good" stories on the news also. There are the stories of the "Good Samaritans" helping people out in accidents. We hear of communities rallying together in the middle of catastrophes. But there seems to be *so much* bad news.

Why?

You know, that's an age-old question. Why? Why do people do these things? Well, we can ask ourselves that question too. Why can *I* sometimes be filled with so much anger and hatred that I would want to hurt somebody, even somebody that I *love*? Why can my heart be filled with so much jealousy sometimes, or discontent? Why do I tell lies sometimes? We can even see it in the youngest of children: Why do even the youngest of children *push* each other, or *hurt* each other... *on purpose!*?

Why??

The Bible tells us. It is because of *Total Depravity*. It is because all men and women, by nature, in themselves, outside of Jesus Christ, are *evil*. Total depravity simply means that all of us as members of the human race are *born in sin* – we are born in such a condition that we actually *hate* what is good, and *love* what is evil. It means that we (left to ourselves) *cannot* do anything good, and do not even *want* to do anything that is good. And it is because of this totally depraved human nature that we commit sins, and that the news is constantly reporting crimes.

This is how the Bible teaches us to view ourselves, outside of Jesus Christ. In Romans 3:10-12 we read, "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."

Now, when the Bible speaks of "doing good," it speaks of "goodness" according to God's standard (and not our own judgment of what is "good" or "bad"). God, as *God*, is ultimately the one who defines what "good" is.

What is God's standard for what is good? Jesus says in Matthew 22:37-39, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and with *all* thy mind... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Only when we have loved God with *all* our being, do we do "good." And what is God's judgment concerning how we have kept that commandment? Romans 8:7-8 tells us that not only have we *not* kept that commandment *at all*, but we don't even *want* to keep it *at all*. We don't even want to love God a little bit, on our own. Now, if we are honest, we'll admit that this is an accurate description of who we actually are, on our own.

There are many other passages of Scripture that emphasize this same thing: “And God saw that the wickedness of man was *great* in the earth, and that *every* imagination of the *thoughts* of his heart was only evil *continually*” (Genesis 6:5; see also Jeremiah 17:9, Romans 8:7-8, Psalm 51:5, Ephesians 2:1-10). In Mark 10:18, Jesus says, “...there is none good but one, that is, God.”

Why is *Total Depravity true*? Because when Adam and Eve fell into sin, they died spiritually (Genesis 2:17), so that they lost the *ability* to do anything good. Instead, they became slaves to sin, so that all they could do was *sin* (Romans 6:17-23). And, when Adam and Eve became slaves to sin, the human race did also, including you and me, as sons and daughters of Adam (Romans 5:12-19).

The good news of the *gospel* is this: God sent Jesus Christ to *free* captive sinners from the slavery of sin. That is the reason Jesus died on the cross – to free totally depraved sinners from death, and from bondage to sin, so that they might begin living for God’s glory (John 8:32-36). In Christ, living out of Christ Himself, we begin to love God in a manner that pleases Him, and begin to put away evil and sin from us. This is possible only through the gift of *faith* (Ephesians 2:8-10).

Galatians 3:22 tells us, “But the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, *that* the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” And that’s why the command comes: *believe* in Jesus Christ, and look to Jesus alone as the one who delivers from the bondage of sin – from hate, jealousy, discontent, fighting, or whatever sin is holding us in bondage.

* T.U.L.I.P. is an acronym for what is commonly called the five points of Calvinism. We will be going through these doctrines topic by topic in this mailer, starting here with Total Depravity.

Rev. Erik Guichelaar
Pastor of Randolph PRC in Randolph, Wisconsin