

Southside Baptist Church
Apollos Teacher Training
Session 1 – Total Depravity
Outline
3-30-25

1. Introduction:

a. Purpose:

- 1) It is the desire of the Pastoral Leadership in unity with the Teacher Development Team that we continue to provide teacher training that further equips our teachers to rightly divide and teach God's Word.
- 2) The specific content of this Apollos training flows from the questions we have received both from teachers and members of the Body concerning Calvinism. Also referred to as Reformed Theology.
- 3) In this training, we will not have the time to look at each position of Calvinistic theology but will focus our time on the significant differences that exist concerning how a person is born again.
- 4) Calvinism commonly uses an acronym called TULIP.
 - a) Total Depravity
 - b) Unconditional Election
 - c) Limited Atonement
 - d) Irresistible Grace
 - e) Perseverance of the Saints.
- 5) In this training we will contrast the position concerning salvation between Calvinism and Traditional theology which is the theological position of Southside Baptist Church.
 - a) Let's begin our investigation by starting with **Total Depravity**.

b. Total Depravity:

- 1) Contrasting definitions for Total Depravity:
- 2) **Calvinism's view of the Total Depravity of man.**
 - a) As a result of Adam's fall, the entire human race is affected; all humanity is dead in trespasses and sins. Man is unable to save himself. **Man is unable to respond to the Gospel.** (Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:10-18).
- 3) **Traditional Theology's view of the Total Depravity of man.**
 - a) We believe in the fall of man, resulting in his complete and universal separation from God and his need of salvation. We believe man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all mankind have inherited a sinful nature, became willful sinners and with the expression of personal choice, are totally unable to regain their former position, and are without excuse before Almighty God. **We do not believe that Total Depravity means Total Inability.** Salvation is available to all those who repent and believe by faith through grace. (Genesis 1:26; 3:1-24; Romans 1:20; 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-6, 8-9, 12)

c. Breaking this down:

- 1) When it comes to comparing Calvinism and Traditional theology's position on the total depravity of man, you would find that there is a lot of agreement in understanding but the one difference that exists is significant when it comes to this doctrine.

- 2) As mentioned above we both believe in the fall of man, we both believe that the whole human race was affected by Adam's sin, and we believe that man is dead in his trespasses and sins.
 - a) Where these two theological positions separate is whether man is able to respond to the gospel of his own free will or whether man is not able to respond until he is first regenerated, born again and then given faith, by God, to believe.
 - b) We both believe that man is responsible, accountable to God, but we do not both believe that man is **Response-able**, meaning able to respond to the Gospel and the drawing of the Spirit of God because man has a freewill to do so.
- 3) The scriptures used to support the Calvinist view of Total Depravity would include Genesis 6:5, Jeremiah 17:9, John 3:3-8. 15-21; John 6:36-40, John 10:26-29, Acts 11:18, Romans 3:10-18, Romans 8:6-8, I Corinthians 2:14, Ephesians 2:1-8, and Ephesians 4:18.
- 4) Keep in mind the major difference we are trying to clarify from the Word is whether man can respond to the Gospel of his own free will or if man must first be regenerated, meaning, born again and then given faith to believe.
- 5) Do you see the difference here?
 - a) The difference hinges on your understanding of what the Bible teaches about the free will of man.
 - b) The question - must man first be born again and given faith by God to believe or is man response-able, meaning from the work of the Spirit of God to draw and the message of the Gospel to convict, man can respond.

d. **The critical question centers on whether man has free will prior to salvation.**

- 1) Think about that for a moment. Does man have free will prior to salvation?
 - a) To figure out if man really has a free will to respond to the Gospel, even after the fall, let's start our investigation back at the beginning by looking at one of the proof texts for this Calvinistic position.

2. **We need to go back to the beginning.**

a. **Calvinist proof text, Genesis 6:5**

- 1) **Genesis 6:5** – “**And GOD saw (sees) that the wickedness** (bad, evil or of thoughts, or of misery, distress, injury) **of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination** (form, purpose) **of the thoughts** (thought, device) **of his heart** (inner man, mind will, heart) **was only evil** (bad, evil, of thoughts – same as wickedness) **continually** (day by day).”
- 2) This (proof text) verse begins a new complete thought in **Genesis 6**.
 - a) God is explaining to us what He sees and what He knows about man.
 - b) This certainly speaks to and proves that man apart from God is totally depraved.
 - c) Since man fell, he is separated from God because of sin, man now has a nature to sin which we see here and is choosing to do what God has described for us here. Man is choosing to sin.
 - d) Is this man's free will choice or is this man doing what God has determined he would do therefore he has no choice other than to do this?
 - e) With this statement I need to clarify that many Calvinists view God's sovereignty to such a degree that God is responsible for every move and decision of man including sin. While it would not be stated this way, many Calvinists would have to admit that God, in their view, is the author of sin.

- 3) Do you think that God is the author of sin?
 - a) **James 1:13** indicates that God cannot be tempted with sin neither does He tempt any person to sin. Sin happens when you are drawn away of your own lust and enticed.
 - b) Wasn't part of the purpose of Jesus coming was to deliver you from the power of sin? If God is the author of sin, then is He delivering you from Himself?
 - c) To the Calvinist in Genesis 6:5, man is doing what God has predetermined he would do, so therefore, man does not have a free will.
 - d) How do we know that after the fall man is free to make choices?

3. God's creations of man:

a. God's plan:

- 1) God's plan was to create man in His own image. Read **Genesis 1:26**.
 - a) The "**us**" and "**our**" in this verse refers to God the Father, God the Son and God the Spirit.
 - b) You can see God's sovereignty here in that He planned how He would make the first man.
 - c) God planned to create man superior to the animals. Of all that God created on the earth, man would be the most important. So, God decided to make man in the "**image of God**," thus elevating him to a position superior to the animals.

b. This, "image of God"

- 1) This "**image of God**" is the distinction made between man and all other creatures.
 - a) What you see in **Genesis 1 and 2** speaks of personal and intimate actions of God in creating mankind (male and female) in comparison to how God created everything else.
- 2) What does it mean that man would be made in God's image.
 - a) The word "**image**", speaks of a **resemblance, a representative figure**. "**Likeness**" also speaks of **resemblance**.
 - b) Obviously, this is not referring to man's body being like God's, because God is Spirit. Rather, God was referring to that part of man that cannot be seen – what the Bible calls our **soul and our spirit**.
 - c) Man was created to be the house of this unseen part – soul and spirit.
- 3) This is key to see and understand:
 - a) God planned that the unseen part of man would have a mind, emotions, and a will, created in the image of God.

c. God planned to give man a mind with which he could think and reason.

- 1) God wanted man to be like Him in this way.
 - a) With a mind, man would be able to **understand** what God wanted to communicate to him.
 - b) God desired to talk with man, and He wanted man to talk to Him. To converse you must have a mind to reason and think.
 - c) He wanted to be able to communicate with man not only by spoken word, but also by written word. To read and comprehend you must have a mind.
 - d) God wanted to enable and equip man to do His work here on earth. A mind is necessary to understand and follow through. **Each response of man in these situations would be a free will response**.
 - e) If man is not free to think and reason, then why would God create him?
 - f) If angels were given free will, why would God do anything less when He created man? **Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:12-18; Rev. 12:3-4, 9**
- 2) It is clear God gave man a mind so that man could understand His purposes and be able to respond intelligently to Him.

- 3) Of course, people can never think and reason with the same perfect knowledge and wisdom that God has, and even the wisest man in this world is like a little child compared to God.
- 4) God desires man's rational response to Him. Man is able to listen to God's Word, understand it, and then do what God said. This was God's plan.
 - a) **That is one reason why you are personally accountable before God.**
- d. **God planned to give man emotions.**
 - 1) The Bible reveals God has emotions.
 - a) He is compassionate and tender and is angry at injustice. Aren't those responses from a will that is free?
 - b) He loves (Jer. 31:3 – "I have loved thee with an everlasting love"), hates (Proverbs 6:16-19), feels sadness (Matt. 23:37, Luke 19:41) and joy (Jer. 9:24), and He wanted man to have emotions as well.
 - c) These emotions flow from reasoning and understanding and are evidence that man has a will that is free.
 - 2) For those who have children, you love them and have a desire within that they would love you too. Why do you think God wanted man to have emotions?
 - a) He wanted man to be able to feel pleasure and contentment. God also wanted man to be able to respond to Him emotionally as man grew in his understanding of Him.
 - b) If God loves man, and he does, He, as a father, desires that man love Him.
- e. **God also planned to give man a will.**
 - 1) Besides having a mind and feelings, God also has a will. He makes decisions and choices. God decides whether He will or will not do something.
 - a) We have already seen that God makes choices! When He created, He decided what each of his creations would be like.
 - 2) God decided, planned for man to also be able to make choices of his own.
 - a) You see that from God's conversation with Adam recorded for us in **Genesis 2**.
 - b) Adam was told to dress and keep the garden and from which trees he could eat from. **Adam had a choice each day that reflected his mind, emotion and will.**
 - 3) When you get up in the morning you decide what you are going to wear. You decide what you will have to drink and eat for breakfast, and you decide where you are going to drive your car.
 - a) You are the one who makes the choices about all of these and countless other things.
 - 4) God could have made man so he would not have choices or that he would have to do everything that God made him to do without any choice.
 - 5) But you see that is exactly how God made the sun, moon and stars. God made them so that they do the same thing every day, every month and every year.
 - 6) But God did not plan to make man like that. God has a will and God wanted man to be able to make choices just as God makes choices.
 - 7) **KEY Thought**
 - a) God planned to make man so he could choose to love and obey God – a choice man could make intelligently because in his mind he would know that God is his loving, kind and all wise Creator.
 - b) Man has a free will to choose because we reason and see that **CHOICE is what gives worth and value to any relationship.**
 - c) In God's plan man can talk with God and come to know what a wise and loving God He is. Man is held accountable for how he responds to that knowledge.

- 8) God could have made man without a free will and, consequently, man would have been unable to make decisions for himself.
 - a) Without the ability to make choices, man would have been forced to do everything God told him to do, like the objects we use and control every day.
 - b) But God did not make us like objects; He places a very high value on us. He intended for us to understand that He is our wise and loving Creator and then, on the basis of that knowledge, to be free to choose to love and obey Him.

f. A summary of what it means that man is created in the image of God.

- 1) Man was to be given a mind that could understand what God wanted to communicate to him; the intelligence to think through what God said and the ability to learn about His character and be able to communicate with Him.
- 2) Man was given emotions so he would be able to respond to God out of love for Him.
- 3) Man was given a will so he could choose to carry out God's will on earth, not as a robot, but as one who would listen to God, appreciate and love Him, and choose to obey Him.
- 4) God planned for man to be made in His image so he could do God's work on earth. This gives man a unique role in His creation. Man has the privilege of being God's representative on earth.
- 5) God gave man a mind and emotions and a will so that man could understand how to do God's work in just the way God wanted it to be done, which would bring joy to both God and man.
- 6) Man was created a rational, moral and spiritual being, for he was created in the image of God.

g. Think about this:

- 1) If this is what you see then what we are looking for is if God somewhere explains that because of the fall, man is completely unable to respond to the One who created Him.
- 2) If you have been created in God's image and given a mind, a reflection of Him, but are not free to reason and think through what the Bible says and thus make decisions, **then are you really a reflection, created in the image of God.**
- 3) We know the mind is depraved because of the fall, but the Bible never states that because of the fall man is unable to respond to everything else but God.
- 4) The will of man was marred by the fall but not taken away.

h. You have to look closely and think:

- 1) Evidence like this forces the Calvinist to create perspectives to support their position.
- 2) For example, the Traditionalist would wonder, if man is not free to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then why the Great Commission to take the Gospel into the world?
- 3) The Calvinist doesn't argue against the Great Commission, but they cannot accept it as a Traditionalist would for their position would falter, so they created a work around.
 - a) **The Calvinist says that there is a general call of the Gospel and a sincere call of the Gospel.** I have not yet found that in the Word.
 - b) They believe that only those who are the elect, something we will get to, are the only ones who hear the sincere call of the Gospel and thus respond and those who hear only the general call of the Gospel **cannot** respond.
 - c) God told us to take the Gospel into the world to preach it to every creature, but He didn't tell us that sometimes when we share it, it is not sincere and at other times it is?

- d) He didn't tell us that He has already selected who could be saved anyway therefore it really doesn't matter if you go or not because that person will be saved even if they don't want to.
 - e) The problem is simply the more you dig the more you find incongruent thinking that isn't really based in the Word of God but more in the minds of man seeking to prove what he presupposes the Word to say.
- 4) It is the position of the Traditionalist that man has the freedom to choose and reason.
 - a) "These attributes were not taken from man when Adam fell as is very evident by simple observation. In scripture God commands the sinner to reason, to choose, and to repent. God's grace operates in our lives in a viable active way." "Calvinism, None Dare Call it Heresy." By Bob Kirkland
 - 5) Think back to the garden after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, we know they died spiritually therefore they are spiritually dead.
 - a) Did you notice that even though Adam and Eve were spiritually dead they were able to hear God and respond to God.
 - 6) Here is another observation worth considering.
 - a) If after the fall, man doesn't have a free will, then why would God command man to do things.
 - b) After Adam's fall, why did God place, **"at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."**
 - c) Because Adam had a free will and because of that God blocked the way to the tree of life so that Adam could not get to it.
- 4. Some scripture and questions we need to answer.**
- a. **To be given a gift versus having to do something to receive the gift are not the same thing.**
 - 1) **Acts 16:25-34** –
 - a) When the jailer asked Paul, what must I do to be saved. Paul doesn't tell the jailer that he must first be regenerated by God and given faith to be saved.
 - b) Paul tells him simply – **"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."**
 - 2) The argument here from Calvinism is that faith is work. Is faith a work? That is a question that we will answer shortly.
 - a) In Calvinism, they use the term, **synergism**, to describe the Spirit's conviction and drawing and man's response in faith and claim that this is unbiblical because man is doing something to be saved.
 - b) Calvinists believe that faith is a work therefore we will need to see what the Bible says.
 - b. **Is faith a work?**
 - 1) **Romans 3:21 to 4:5 Read**
 - 2) **Verse 3** – **"For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it (his faith, Abraham's faith) was counted unto him for righteousness."**
 - a) It is important to note here that it states that Abraham's faith was **"his faith"** it does not state that God gave him the faith.
 - b) It also does not say that Abraham's faith was a work in any way that contributed to him being justified by God.
 - c) If you keep looking you will also see here that it doesn't say that Christ's righteousness was imputed to Abraham as righteousness.

- d) It says that it was Abraham's faith that was reckoned to him as righteousness.
- e) To have faith is to have the right attitude to God – thus Abraham's faith is counted to him as righteousness. That takes you right into **verses 4 and 5** which explains more clearly **verse 3**.
- 3) **Verse 4-5** - These verses are an explanation of the scripture quotation given in **verse 3**.
 - a) **Verse 4** is an illustration from everyday life. The man who works receives his wages from something he has earned, therefore it is not considered to be a gift.
 - b) From a translation perspective, you could say **verse 4** this way. **"A man who works gets money for what he has done, but people do not say that his money is a gift; rather, they say that he earned it."**
 - c) The second clause of **verse 4** may also be rendered as **"but he does not think that his wages are something which the one who hired him gave him as a gift."**¹ "A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Book of Romans"
- 4) Faith in God is not like the concept of work, as something that merits wages.
 - a) Faith is not to be seen as a work of which the reward is salvation otherwise the person who has faith would be working.
- 5) This is significant as it relates to translating this verse correctly. From "A Handbook on Paul's Letter to the Book of Romans"
 - a) "One difficulty arises from the fact that there is an abrupt shift in the area of meaning of *works* from **verse 4 to verse 5**."
 - b) In **verse 4** **work** is to be understood in the ordinary sense of working for pay.
 - c) In **verse 5**, however, the concern is not with work in the ordinary sense of physical activity **but with "working for merit with God."**
 - d) To indicate this difference in the meaning of work in **verse 5**, some translators have transposed the first clause to follow the clause dealing with faith in God—for example, **"the man who puts his faith in God rather than in his work"** or **"the man who trusts God rather than his work."**
 - e) You could also say the essence of this verse – **"This, man who trusts God rather than trusting in what he does to gain God's favor."**² **"But let us consider the man who trusts God rather than trusting in his works."**
- 6) In the definition of faith in **Hebrews 11:1**, it does not include anything that says that it is a gift that God gives to anyone who is then able to believe.
- c. **Is faith a gift?**
 - 1) What about the Calvinist position that says that faith is a gift?
 - a) **Ephesians 2:8-9** is often argued as a proof text to show that faith is a gift from God.
 - 2) Remember that you will hear me say from time to time that the interpretation method I use to rightly divide the Word of God involves 4 important components.
 - a) Literal, what God has said,
 - b) Grammatical, how He said it,
 - c) Historical, when He said it and what would be important to know from time.
 - d) Comparison, comparing scripture with scripture to ensure accuracy.

- 3) Here, in **Ephesians 2:8-9**, the grammatical construction solves the dilemma that is presented.
- a) In the Greek text the word for “**faith**” is feminine in gender and the word for “**that**” in the key phrase, “**that not of yourself**” is neuter.
 - b) Grammatically “**that**” cannot refer to “**faith**” because if “**that**” did, they would be the same gender. Why is that?
 - c) In Greek, everything has gender. Genders in nouns, adjectives and pronouns must always match. In this verse, “**faith**” is feminine so anything that describes it or acts as a pronoun for it must also be feminine.
 - d) Since “**that**” is neuter it can’t describe the feminine “**faith**”.
 - e) So, if “**that**” is not referring to “**faith**” as being the gift, then what is the gift.
 - f) “**That**” is referring to the whole subject being presented here which is salvation. It is salvation that is the gift of God and not faith.
 - g) This is the same point that you see Paul making in **Romans 4** that salvation is not something you can earn or gain by merit, but that salvation is by grace through faith.
- d. **Remember how God created man?**
- 1) Think about the elements that are in saving faith that reflect to how God created man and what God gave to man.
 - a) Knowledge – hard to believe in something you know nothing about.
 - b) Belief – it is possible to know about something and not believe it.
 - c) Dependence – It is possible to know about something, believe it and yet not depend on it.
 - 2) Look at this in light of **John 5:24** –
 - a) “**Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my Word (Knowledge) and Believeth on Him that sent me, (Faith), hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation (Judgment); but is passed from death to life.**”
 - 3) The Greek word for faith, “**pistis**” in the New Testament speaks of these things.
 - a) Belief, trust; that which produces belief, evidence, token, pledge, engagement and also trust in its objective aspect, observance of trust, fidelity.
 - b) Faith in God in the Bible is described as reliance and belief proceeding from testimony or authority.
 - c) **Biblical faith is evidence-based.** You can see this in **John 20:30-31**. The key, “**But these are written...**” Why? **This is the evidence that you might believe.**
 - 4) Are there any examples of this playing out?
 - a) How about **John 2:11** – through what Jesus did He manifested His glory, and the fruit is that His disciples believed.
 - b) **John 3:2** – Nicodemus, an unsaved leader sees the evidence and recognizes that it points him to God.
 - c) **John 5:39-42** – “many believed because of his own word.”
 - d) **John 4:53**, What was the evidence that convinced this father that Jesus was real? “**The father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth.**” How did he respond? He believed.
 - e) **John 6:14** what did the men say was the evidence that caused them to make their conclusion? When they had seen the miracle. What do you see? Jesus is drawing out the faith of people by what He did.

e. **How do we know that an unbeliever can show forth trust, faith?**

- 1) Do you see that in everyday relationships where through actions, words and events you come either to trust or not trust that person.
 - a) The evidence leads you to conclude this person can be trusted or not be trusted. Faith is built through evidence. That is **Romans 10:17**.
- 2) When you begin to look down this road you can see how that people exhibit faith in many things every day. Things that they read, things they hear, people, leaders, etc.
- 3) Do you think that man is not free when he does that?
 - a) This capacity to trust is how God created us and is the fruit of the freedom of will and is a part of our nature therefore man can be held accountable before God for the decisions he makes.
- 4) Remember, it is choice, the freedom to decide is what gives worth and value to every relationship.
- 5) What is the hope of God for each person He has given this gift of free will to?
 - a) That through the evidence of His life, His Word and our lives who have been changed by the Gospel, that all would come to repentance.
- 6) Isn't that the logical conclusion of verses like **Romans 1:21** –
 - a) **“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.”** Did they choose that?
 - b) Unbelievers who knew God but made the decisions to reject God. Look at where their rejection led them. They had faith but not in God. Their faith was placed in other things.
- 7) John wrote in **I John 5:9** –
 - a) **“If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.”**
 - b) We accept man's testimony, but God's testimony is greater because it is the testimony of God, which he has given about his Son.”
- 8) **Matthew 8:8-10** –
 - a) Jesus told the centurion that He would come to his house to heal his servant. The man replied, **“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. (What was it that taught this man about authority that he would then trust, have faith in authority standing before him?)** ⁹ **For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this *man*, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth *it*. (Do you see how his faith was built in authority so that when he encountered the true authority he didn't second guess it?)** ¹⁰ **When Jesus heard *it*, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”** Notice what Jesus said and didn't say here.
 - b) Jesus **“marvelled”** and said, **“Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.”** Isn't that interesting that Jesus didn't say here, there is no one in Israel that I have given such great faith to but this one.

f. **Does Regeneration happen before Faith?**

- 1) There are many quotes that you can pull from prominent Calvinist preachers and leaders that all basically say the same thing. You can't have faith until first you have been born again. What is interesting about all of the quotes I read, not one time was there a scripture reference attached to it.
- 2) What does the Bible say. Does it give us any hint as to the order of salvation that is put in question by the Calvinist proponents?
- 3) **John 3:14-15** –
 - a) **“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”**
 - b) What does Jesus Himself say here? **“The son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life.”**
 - c) That is what He said, right? Note what He did not say. He did not say so that everyone who has eternal life may believe.
- 4) What did Jesus say in **verse 18**?
 - a) **“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”**
- 5) Look at **John 3:36** –
 - a) **“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.”** It doesn't say, whoever has eternal life believes in the Son.
- 6) What is the condition here that Jesus set forth to obtain eternal life?
 - a) **It is faith in Christ.** What is the condition that Jesus sets forth so that you not be condemned? It is faith in Christ.
 - b) Did you catch that John also helped here with our understanding for he said that the person who does not believe is condemned.

5. **Summary:**

- a. We have taken the first step in being better equipped in understanding the difference between Calvinism and Traditional Theology concerning the Total Depravity of man in relation to the Gospel.
 - 1) Calvinism believes that because man is totally depraved that they cannot respond to the drawing of the Spirit and the message of the Gospel until they have first been regenerated, born again and given faith by God. This position flows from their belief that man does not have a free will to respond to the Gospel.
 - 2) Traditional Theology believes that man is totally depraved and unable to save himself but because man has a free will, he is able to respond to the Spirit of God drawing and the message of the Gospel convicting them of their need of salvation. This position flows from the belief that man was created with a free will and that freedom was not taken away because of the fall.