

Sanctification in Community: The Doctrines of Humanity and Sin

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I. Introduction

The study of humanity or anthropology answers two philosophical questions primary in every system of thought: (1) Who/What am I? and (2) Why am I here? Added to these primary questions are several subsidiary questions: (3) Where did I come from? (4) Why am I the way that I am? and (5) Can I change? All of these questions are critical to the pursuit of sanctification.

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III. The Origin of Man

A discussion of who/what man is depends in large part on where man came from. If, indeed, man is evolved from lower forms of life, as is widely held today, then man differs little from an animal in his constitution, and, in fact, has little or no relationship with God or responsibility to him. However, if man has been uniquely created by God in his image, something far different may be said about man's being and function.

A. The Origin of the First Human

1. The first man was created supernaturally and directly.

Genesis 1:26–27—God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him.

Genesis 2:7—The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

a. Adam's creation was direct and immediate.

(1) Like the rest of the creation events of Genesis 1, man was created by divine impulse as part of the “Let there be...it was so” sequence on a single solar day

(cf. Ps 33:6, 9). There is no room in the language for gaps, elongated days, progression, or any other provision for evolutionary development.

(2) The major verb employed (*bara'*) is used exclusively of divine activity in the OT. There is no room for intermediate agency (evolutionary theory).

(3) Other verbs employed imply direct and immediate creation.

- God *formed* man out of dust (Gen 2:7).
- God *breathed* life into man (Gen 2:7).

b. Adam's body was created from previously existing material.

(1) That Adam's creation was not *ex nihilo* does not make his creation any less supernatural. In fact, the verbs used (making, forming, fashioning) may imply a greater intimacy in the human creation than is implied by the less personal fiat creation of the rest of the universe. God did not say "Let there be man," but "Let us make man."

(2) The material of Adam's formation is "dust," that is, ordinary soil. In no way can this imply animal ancestry. Indeed, the fact that man "returns to dust" (3:19) makes this suggestion laughable.

c. Adam's immaterial was imparted immediately to him by the breath of God. It was this act that imparted to man, and only to man, the image of God.

2. Eve was likewise created supernaturally and directly.

Genesis 1:27—Male and female created he them.

Genesis 2:21–22—The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.

Note: Both man and woman are (in) God's image. God, as pure Spirit, is neither male nor female. The preference of the Scripture-writers for male gender references to God is not based on any physical considerations. Still, since God's functional relationship to his creation is that of ruling and leading—operations that align with male function within the family unit (1 Cor 11:7). It is apparently for this reason that the Scripture writers, under inspiration, consistently reference God as though male. Though God is sometimes described as having motherly qualities (e.g., Matt 23:37), his predominate functions are masculine in nature. But this does not mean that women are any less in the image of God than men.

a. Eve had biological solidarity with Adam even though God formed her directly.

It is not by coincidence that Eve was created from Adam's rib and not from the dust of the ground. Had she been entirely independent of Adam, then she would have stood equal with Adam as the head of the human race. Though she was not *seminally* in Adam, she was still represented by his headship over the human race.

1 Corinthians 11:7–9—Man is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man; for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake.

b. Eve was created *for* Adam

Genesis 2:18–22—The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable [corresponding to, appropriate] for him.” The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the Lord God took one of his ribs and...fashioned into a woman the rib which he had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.

The correspondence that Adam sought and received was more than physical. It included the physical, but also met his need for someone who could **complement** him intellectually, emotionally, and personally, and who also could **supplement** him functionally. Eve provided him with a domain worthy of his stature as King of the Earth. And while Adam was made without deficiency, he could not fulfill his divine destiny alone.

3. Significant Implications of the Method of Creation for the Human Race

a. The Solidarity of and Representative Adamic Headship over the Human Race

1 Corinthians 11:8, 12— Man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;...man has his birth through the woman.

Acts 17:26—He made from one man every nation of mankind.

There is a spiritual unity of the human race that is based on, yet transcends the physical unity of the race. All of humanity are “in Adam” and receives their depraved souls by means of human procreation. However, while Eve technically sinned first, it is *Adam* who is charged with the responsibility for that inherited depravity. He was God’s appointed representative for mankind, apparently, because he was (1) created first, (2) was manifestly responsible for Eve, and (3) sinned willfully (1 Tim 2:12–14). Adam, not Eve, is the representative head of the human race.

b. The Functional Headship of Men over Women

1 Timothy 2:12–13—I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

It is important to note that the roles of *ruling* and *leading* for men and *submitting* and *helping* for women are not a result of the Fall. Since the Fall man has become abusive in his ruling function and woman resentful of her role as man’s “helper” (Gen 3:16), but these functional distinctions existed outside of and prior to sin.

The functional hierarchy of men over women in the family and in the church does

not imply superiority of personal value, intellectual acumen, or spiritual vitality. Men are not “better” than women, any more than governors are “better” than their citizens or employers “better” than their employees. In fact, when Paul describes the functional inequality of men and women, he compares it to the functional inequality of the members of the Godhead:

“I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, *and God is the head of Christ*” (1 Cor 11:3).

Unless we are prepared to say that the Father is personally superior to the Son, we cannot conclude that men are personally superior to women. The eternal nature of the functional “subordination” of the Son to the Father has in recent days become a matter of much consternation as well; still, we remain emphatic that economic inequality is not of a kind with ontological inequality.

c. The True Dignity of Womanhood

Though the woman is just as much in God’s image as a man (Gen 1:26–27), men and women do not realize their true dignity in the same way. Men are designed by God to realize their dignity through *ruling* and *working* in the created realm at large. Women are physiologically, neurologically, and psychologically distinct from men, and are designed by God as “weaker” and more dependent (1 Pet 3:7), more docile (1 Tim 2:9–15), and more subjective/relational than men (Tit 2:4–5).

The greatest dignity a woman can achieve in society is in the complementary, supporting, and commiserative contribution she makes within her relationships: both to her children and her husband (Titus 2:4–5), and also to her extended family (1 Tim 5:3–4), the church (Titus 2:3; 1 Tim 5:9–10), and society in general (Prov 31). Anti-Christian culture rejects this view, claiming that the biblical view of womanhood demeans woman’s value; the Bible responds, to the contrary, that society has robbed woman of her dignity by discrediting her God-given station.

Further Implications for Sanctification in Community: The relational failures that dominate pastoral counseling caseloads are often connected to the failure of persons to recognize and pursue their God-assigned roles. This is one of the principal elements of Adam’s curse: “Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Gen 3:16). Similar role failures in Scripture attach in Scripture to our deficiencies as parents/children, employers/employees, governors/governed, etc. Because secular psychology in the main rejects these roles as normative (or even as ethical at times), Christian mentors are able to make unique and critical contributions in one-another counseling settings not seen in secular psychology or its Christian hybrid forms.

d. The Unnaturalness of Homosexuality

A woman is the only valid counterpart to a man. Neither an animal nor another man is suitable for or compatible with man, and neither can assist man in his original mandate to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. For this reason the Bible soundly condemns all forms of bestiality (Lev 20:15–16), lesbianism (Rom 1:26), and homosexuality (Rom 1:27) as unnatural, a product of the rejection of the Creator (cf. Rom 1:25).

Notes Toward a Theology of Homosexuality:

- (1) *Homosexuality is sin* (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:27–28; 1 Cor 6:9–10; 1 Tim 1:8–10).
- (2) *Homosexuality is an advanced sin.* Not only does the language of Romans 1 suggest that homosexuality is a sin to which people graduate as their native depravity deepens (Rom 1:27–28), it is also classed in the Mosaic economy as a capital crime (Lev 20:13).
- (3) As with all sins, *both homosexual desire and homosexual acts are alike sinful* (in principle, Matt 5:27–28). It is true, of course, that acting on a sinful desire is more sinful than merely having that desire, but the fact remains that both the desire to sin and the act of sinful are alike punishable and are alike are the object of Christian mortification.

It makes no substantial difference, further, whether homosexual tendencies are genetically inherited and with which one is born. All humans are born with a general bent to sin (Ps 51:5; 58:3; Eph 2:3; etc.), and it is likely that each of us inherits a unique blend of susceptibilities, tendencies, orientations, and even addictions with which we must wage war. For some, that struggle includes homosexual tendencies. This “victimization” certainly should evoke sympathy among the believing community, but never toleration for the sin.

- (4) *There is no such thing as a “Christian homosexual”* (any more than there is a “Christian liar,” a “Christian drunkard,” or a “Christian adulterer”). There are Christians who struggle with homosexual lusts (just as there are Christians who struggle with lying, drunkenness, and more “natural” sexual lusts), but the power that these sins have over us has been definitively broken:

1 Cor 6:9–11—Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexuals nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ***And that is what some of you were.*** But you have been washed, you have been sanctified, you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

- (5) *No sin, including homosexuality renders a person irremediable.* As the text above emphatically implies, the power of regenerating grace is overwhelmingly greater than the power of sin.

e. The Absurdity of Human Evolution

The suggestion of human evolution, in addition to diffusing/denying man’s need for and accountability to God, further (1) destroys the solidarity of the human race, (2) denies the possibility of a uniformly inherited depravity, and (3) leaves no possibility for a “second Adam” to solve our sin problem by becoming us.

IV. The Composition of Man

A. Man is a psychosomatic unity.

Though debate exists about the number of component “parts” man has (body, soul, spirit, mind, heart, etc.), it is important to recognize that man is an essential unity. Unlike God and angels, who are characterized as “spirits,” that is, marked by no essential connection to the material (John 4:24; Heb 1:14), man is an essential unity of body and spirit. At death, man’s spirit is temporarily disembodied, but this is neither a desirable nor permanent state.

2 Corinthians 5:2—In this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked.

Psalms 88:10—Will you perform wonders for the dead? Will the departed spirits rise and praise you?

Man is a spirit (essence) and *has* a body (substance).

Implications for Sanctification in Community: That humans are a psychosomatic unity means that injuries to the body or the soul are never isolated. The lack of food/rest, chemical imbalances or other material deficiencies of the physical brain can contribute to stress on the mind, will, and affections of a person *or vice versa*. For this reason, soul care consists *in part* in physical concern (1 Sam 16:23; 1 Kgs 19:5–18; Mark 6:31). The medical community, too, may contribute credibly to the complex cure of maladies of the soul. As we have seen above, this is no violation of the sufficiency of Scripture, as Scripture itself speaks to this unity and offers a philosophical foundation for such collaboration.

Rarely, however, are spiritual deficiencies *isolated* in the physical, and the whole solution to such problems are never simply a “pill.” Christian sanctification always involves more.

B. Man has two aspects, material and immaterial; physical and metaphysical.

Matthew 10:28—Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

James 2:26—The body without the spirit is dead.

2 Corinthians 4:16—Though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.

Also Rom 12:2–2; 1 Cor 5:5; 7:34; 2 Cor 7:1

1. The Material Aspect: Man’s Body

- a. A material body composed from elements of man’s material environment is essential to complete humanity (Gen 2:7; Ps 139:13–16).
- b. The promise of resurrection guarantees the permanent corporeal status of all humanity, a status shared even by Christ in his unique position as the God-man.

2 Corinthians 5:1–4—We know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven, inasmuch as we, having put it on, will not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed, so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life.

Hebrews 2:14–17 cf. 7:24—Since the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.... He had to be made like his brethren in all things, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.... [7:24] Jesus, holds his priesthood permanently.

- c. The Bible roundly condemns the ascetic disregard of the body.

Colossians 2:23—Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.

1 Corinthians 13:3—If I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.

1 Timothy 5:23—No longer drink water exclusively, but use a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

- d. The Bible also condemns wanton assent to physical lusts. Sanctification is never expressed as being “authentic” or “true to yourself.”

1 Corinthians 6:18–20—Flee immorality.... Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.

1 Corinthians 9:27—I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Colossians 3:5—Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

- e. Instead, the Bible encourages and even commands the full enjoyment of the human appetites within the parameters defined by God.

Ecclesiastes 9:7–9—Go then, eat your bread in happiness and drink your wine with a cheerful heart; for God has already approved your works. Let your clothes be white all the time, and let not oil be lacking on your head. Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.

Proverbs 5:18–19—Rejoice in the wife of your youth. As a loving hind and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; be exhilarated always with her love (cf. the Song of Solomon).

2. The Immaterial Aspect: Man’s Soul/Spirit/Mind/Heart/Strength

The variety of terms used to describe man’s immaterial aspect speaks to the great complexity of the human spirit. Further, we must also recognize that these terms are contextually colored, making the terms difficult to distance from the philosophical milieu that saw them coined. For instance, the OT and NT terms for “soul” (*nephesh* and *psuche*, respectively), while essential synonyms, differ radically from each other in their secular origin and conception. Arriving at a biblical understanding of the immaterial portion of man is thus very challenging.

- a. Functions of the Human Immaterial

(1) The soul/spirit is the “control center” of a person that expresses itself

physically/sensually through the body. The intersection of the soul and body in the human brain/glands is a great mystery that is not developed in Scripture and not properly subjectable to scientific inquiry.

- (2) The soul/spirit is the seat of man's personhood.

Genesis 12:5; 14:21—They accumulated “people” (*nepheshim*).

Acts 27:37—275 persons (*psuche*) were on the ship.

- (3) The soul/spirit is the seat of man's morality.

Jeremiah 17:9—The *heart* is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Ezekiel 18:20—The *person* (*nephesh*) who sins will die.

Mark 7:21 For from *within*, out of men's *hearts*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery... (cf. Christ's assessment of the Mosaic Law in Matt 5)

- (4) The soul/spirit is the source of man's disposition

Proverbs 19:15—An idle man (*nephesh*) will suffer hunger

Proverbs 11:13—A trustworthy *spirit* conceals a matter.

1 Corinthians 4:21—Paul came to them “with a gentle *spirit*.”

2 Peter 2:14—Unstable *souls* are easily enticed.

- (5) The soul/spirit is the seat of human volition

Matt 26:41—The *spirit* is willing but the flesh is weak.

Ephesians 6:6—Do the will of God from the *heart*.

- (6) The soul/spirit is the seat of human passions.

Proverbs 14:29—He who is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who is quick-tempered (lit. a “quick-tempered spirit”) exalts folly.

John 11:33—Jesus was “deeply moved in *spirit* and was troubled.”

- (7) The soul/spirit is source of all religious impulses.

Psalm 42:2—My *soul* thirsts for God.

Ezekiel 36:26–27— I will give you a new heart and put a new *spirit* within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you will be careful to observe my ordinances.

John 4:24—Those who worship must worship in *spirit*.

Matthew 22:37—You shall love the Lord your God with all your *heart*, and with all your *soul*, and with all your *mind*.

b. Implications for Sanctification in Community

Although physical and traumatic circumstances can weaken the soul and render us vulnerable to sin, the solution is never simply to address the physical and psychological duress *alone*. One another ministry surely involves physical and emotional care/concern (Rom 12:10; 15:7; Eph 4:2, 32; 1 Thess 5:11; 1 Pet 1:22; etc.), but it also involves instruction (Rom 15:14; Eph 5:19), admonition (Col 3:16), exhortation to good behavior and habits of godliness (Heb 10:24–25). Mutual counsel in a church context must include *all* of these things.

V. The Image of God in Man: A Brief Review

A. The Biblical Material

Genesis 1:26–27—God said, “Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness;...

God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female.

Genesis 5:1, 3—In the day when God created man, he made him in the likeness of God....

And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, he became the father of [a son] in his own likeness, according to his image, and named him Seth.

Genesis 9:6—Whoever sheds man’s blood, by man his blood shall be shed, for in the image of God he made man.

1 Corinthians 11:7—A man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

James 3:9—With [the tongue] we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God.

B. Definition

When Adam and Eve fell, something was lost and something was retained. We lost all of the moral excellencies that were provisionally ours, might have been ours by obedience, and which will be ours in our glorified state. But all persons, even unregenerate ones, retain the image of God.

The Capacity (retained intact by all humans as part of the <i>imago dei</i> , even those who are spiritually dead)	The Perfection (available to and developing in believers alone as part of the <i>imago Christi</i>)
Rational Capacity	Accepting the eminently reasonable biblical worldview
Volitional Capacity	Choosing what is good and beautiful and true
Linguistic Capacity	Submitting to the Bible’s plain meaning
Religious Capacities	Desiring God

C. Implications

All humans who are “converted/recovering men” (Boston) have both the capacity and the new nature necessary to advancing in Christian holiness—and we should expect, even insist on it in our church relationships.

VI. The Original State of Man

In Thomas Boston's well-known book on Reformed anthropology, *Human Nature in Its Fourfold State*, he argues for four states of man: (a) Primitive Integrity; (b) Entire Depravity; (c) Begun Recovery; and (d) Consummate Happiness or Misery.

The Original Man	able to sin, able not to sin
The Depraved Man	not able not to sin
The Converted/Recovering Man	able not to sin
The Glorified Man	unable to sin

A. Adam was a morally responsible agent.

Genesis 2:17—Adam had inalienable moral obligations with respect to God, his wife, his world, and specifically to the tree of knowledge of good and evil.

B. Adam was a volitionally free agent.

Adam was free from the debilitating impulses of a sin nature. All impulse to sin was generated from without and was non-constraining.

C. Adam had a provisionally holy nature.

Genesis 1:31—He was created “very good.”

Ecclesiastes 7:29—God made mankind upright, but men have gone after many schemes.

D. Adam had an untested moral character.

As we mentioned above, the image of God in Adam did not include the moral perfections found in Christ and possessed by those in the glorified state. These perfections made were available to Adam, but could be his only via the confirmation of his holiness through faithful obedience. Thus, even though Adam's nature was provisionally holy and even inclined toward further holiness, his was a state of “unconfirmed creaturely holiness”: he did not yet have a holy *character*, that is, an acquired tendency to do right in the face of moral options. Character is borne in experience, not nature, and Adam was created without experience of any kind.

Question: If Adam and Eve were inclined to righteousness, then why did they sin?

Adam and Eve's natures were provisionally holy but not immutably inclined to holiness. They also had other internal inclinations or *appetites* that were themselves good, but could be set in conflict with their inclination to righteousness. Eve's chaste inclinations toward the good, the beautiful, and the true, which Satan cleverly convinced her could be satiated by fruit that was ‘good for food,’ ‘a delight to the eye,’ and ‘desirable to make one wise,’ were set at odds with her inclination to righteousness, with the result that she was deceived into sinning. Adam shared all these appetites, and, further, the appetite to be in harmony with his sinning wife. The latter inclination, apparently overwhelmed his inclination to be in harmony with God, causing him to join Eve deliberately in her sin.

VII. The Freedom of the Will

A. Man is a moral *agent*.

Man is endowed with the power to make ethical choices and perform corresponding actions within his created realm. This agency is not illusory.

B. Man is a *responsible* moral agent.

God propositionally communicates to man certain responsibilities, obligations, and consequences, and equips him with a conscience that communicates moral *ought* (i.e., not *desire*, but an awareness of obligation and a corresponding awareness of approval or guilt in the face of actions).

C. Man is a *free* moral agent.

Responsibility is predicated on freedom. Man *willingly* does all that he does, or else he is not the instrument of his own actions and hence not responsible for his own actions. This is what Edwards described and defended as the *natural freedom* of the will.

D. Man's *dominant impulses* determines the character of his moral agency.

1. All persons possess a complex of attributes or a "nature" by which they are defined, and which informs their every decision.

Proverbs 4:23—Guard your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life.

Matthew 12:34–35—The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of his good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of his evil treasure what is evil.

Mark 7:21–23—From within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

Ephesians 2:3—All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.

2. Fallen man possesses only foul dispositions, desires, interests, motives, principles, habits, etc., and these form the basis for all his decisions and actions:

Romans 8:7–8—The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.

Jeremiah 13:23—Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

At no point, however, does God oblige fallen man to *act contrary to the dominant impulses of his nature*, which makes fallen man truly free. Freedom, as such, resides not in the power of *contrary/alternative choice*, but the power of *spontaneity*. Fallen man, as such, enjoys [natural] freedom of the will, all the while living in [moral] bondage to his own depravity.

3. The converted or “recovering” man receives new dispositions, desires, interests, motives, principles, habits, etc., which gradually displace the old (a.k.a. sanctification). The converted man, thus, has natural freedom, and with it a moral freedom that inexorably grows out of the believer’s death to sin’s domination.

Romans 7:25—I myself in my mind am a slave to God’s law, but in the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

VIII. The Fall of Man into Sin

Man did not remain in his original state. He used his freedom to heed an external suggestion to violate God’s moral decree. As we shall see, however, the guilt for man’s sin did not lie outside of man. Adam and Eve sinned willingly and with full knowledge.

A. The Test

1. The Nature of the Test

The test was not about the tree. Its fruit did not contain super-vegetative powers that could give Adam knowledge. It was an ordinary tree. The knowledge of good and evil was not in the fruit itself but in the act of eating. Adam and Eve had cognitive or descriptive knowledge of good and evil, but by opting not to eat, Adam and Eve would have gained experimental knowledge of the good by doing good, just as God himself had (Gen 5:3, 22). But in this test was also the inherent possibility that they might receive experimental knowledge of evil by doing evil.

2. The Purpose of the Test

The test was designed to give Adam experiential knowledge of right and wrong in the face of moral options. In doing so, his untested *nature* would be forged into fixed *character* in the crucible of experience. There were two hypothetical outcomes:

- a. Adam could obey, receive experiential knowledge of right and wrong through obedience, be confirmed in holiness, and develop sinless nature. In this state he would have eaten of the tree of life and enjoyed his terrestrial paradise forever.
- b. Adam could disobey, receive experiential knowledge of right and wrong through disobedience, be confirmed in sin and total depravity.

B. The Temptation

1. The Method

Satan employed an ordinary snake as his mouthpiece. In the pre-fall state, snakes were apparently equipped with great intelligence (he was “more crafty” than all other animals—3:1) and an erect posture (3:14). The serpent’s linguistic capabilities, however, should have alerted her that something was amiss.

2. The Means

a. Doubt

Genesis 3:1—Did God *really* say...?

b. Distortion

Genesis 3:1—“You must not eat from *every* tree in the garden.”

In itself this is not a lie. God had identified one tree that was not for consumption with the words, “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden...[except one].” But Satan restated God’s command in a negative way.

Genesis 3:5—“God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.”

Again, there is some truth here. By eating, Eve would receive an experiential knowledge of good and evil, as God did. But this knowledge would not be *exactly* as God’s, which is implied. The only way for her to have had this knowledge *exactly* as God had it was by rejecting the fruit.

c. Denial

Genesis 3:4—“You shall not surely die.”

While a case might be made for further distortion here, in that Eve did not die in every possible sense; Satan should be seen here as delivering an outright lie by denying the truth of a direct statement by God.

3. The Appeal

Just as Satan’s ploy with Jesus and with all believers today, Satan used a threefold appeal to deceive Eve.

a. An Appeal to Physical Appetites and Selfish Lust—**The Good**

Genesis 3:6—It was “good for food.”

Cf. Matthew 4:3—Command that these stones become bread
and 1 John 2:16—The lust of the flesh.

b. An Appeal to Aesthetic Appreciation and Selfish Power—**The Beautiful**

Genesis 3:6—A delight to the eyes.

Cf. Matthew 4:8—Satan “showed him all the kingdoms of the world.”
and 1 John 2:16—The lust of the eyes

c. An Appeal to Social Acceptance and Selfish Pride—**The (Selectively) True.**

Genesis 3:6—Desirable to make one wise

Cf. Matthew 4:6—“If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down...and...his angels will lift you up in their hands.”
and 1 John 2:16—The pride of life

C. The Capitulation

Adam lived in Edenic conditions where all his physical appetites were fully satiated, where he had authority over the whole world, and where the created universe gladly owned him as king. Yet he sinned because he thought he could have even more without accountability to God.

Jesus Christ by right should have had all that Adam had and more, but even when the enjoyment of these privileges were temporarily withheld from him, he refused to sin by acquiring them other than from by hand of God.

The “recovering men” that make up the church continue to face temptation, but with an additional weight: the remnants of sin. Still, we are informed that in this state, “No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it” (1 Cor 10:13).

D. The Result

1. For Adam and Eve

a. Spiritual Death

Genesis 3:8—They hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

They were cut off from the life of God (cf. Eph 4:18). Instead of desiring loving, daily fellowship with God, they sought to avoid it. In its place was alienation from and, in fact, outright hostility toward God.

b. Physical Death

Genesis 3:19—You will return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.

Adam lived on physically after he ate the fruit. Genesis 3:19 and 1 Corinthians 15:22, however, indicate that *physical* death may be attributed to Adam’s sin. It is probably best to take the “in that day” of Genesis 2:17 either (1) as meaning that on the day they ate, the seeds of death would be sown and their mortality assured or, better, (2) in an idiomatic sense (i.e., “as surely as you eat you will die”).

c. Loss of Dominion

Genesis 3:17–19—Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food.

While man remains “king of the earth,” his practical ability to rule was severely hampered by thorns, thistles, and all sorts of sweat-inducing resistance from the created realm (cf. Heb 2:8).

d. Anatomical Degeneration

Genesis 3:16a—I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will

give birth to children.

Childbirth would apparently have been painless had Edenic conditions continued. Instead, God effected structural changes in Eve's body that resulted in severe pain during the delivery of children.

e. Expulsion from the Garden

Genesis 3:23–24—God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

Like the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of life was not a magical tree, but a symbolic one. Some have suggested that eating of this tree in a state of sin would instantly have confirmed Adam irreparably in his fallen state, but this is unlikely. Instead, God bars the way to the tree of life much as the Church guards the way to the Table—not because eating would “poison” the unworthy partaker (though the threat of harm exists in both situations), but because the privilege of eating is extended only to those who are in possession of spiritual life. This tree reappears in Revelation 22:2, where all who are granted entry into the New Jerusalem are invited to eat of the tree.

f. A Change in Relationship Between Adam and Eve

Genesis 3:16b—Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

Adam's natural leadership became impersonal, impassive, even abusive, and Eve's natural submission gave way to perpetual resentment, independence, and lust for the acquisition of functional equality with her husband. These tendencies feed on each other and account for nearly all marital problems today.

2. For the Human Race in General

In addition to the perpetuation of the factors in the previous section, all mankind also suffers...

- a. The possibility of eternal death, i.e., the irrevocable confirmation of spiritual death for those who fail to exercise faith in God.
- b. The imputation of Adam's sin, guilt, and capital sentence.

Romans 5:18—Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.

- c. The genetic inheritance of sin's pollution in the sin nature.

Romans 5:12—Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men.

IX. The Definition and Nature of Sin

A. Terms for Sin

1. Strong defines *sin* as “lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state” (549). Other biblical terms for sin round out the definition:
 - a. The most common terms for sin in both testaments connote the idea of *missing the mark*, in this case, failing to meet a righteous standard.

Ecclesiastes 7:20—There is not a righteous man on earth who does what is right and never *sins* (cf. Judg 20:16—Each one could sling a stone and not *miss*).

Romans 3:23—All have *sinned* and come short of the glory of God.
 - b. Active terms for sin include...
 - (1) *Transgression*—crossing a boundary
 - (2) *Iniquity/Unrighteousness*—corruption or perversion of what is right; making crooked that which is straight.
 - (3) *Rebellion*—resistance of moral restraint
 - (4) *Disobedience*—refusal to do what God has commanded.
 - b. Stative terms for sin include...
 - (1) *Wickedness/Evil*—Vile inner character
 - (2) *Ungodliness*—Inward pollution
 - c. Passive terms for sin include...
 - (1) *Ignorance*—culpable ignorance.
 - (2) *Failure/Falling/Debts*—Failure to meet God’s expectations.
2. By *Original Sin* is meant that sinful state and condition in which men are born. It is composed of two aspects:
 - a. *Imputed Guilt*: All men bear the guilt of Adam’s representative sin: **Man has sin.**
 - b. *Inherited Corruption*: All men are born with a nature that cannot please God. **Man is a sinner and commits sins.**

<i>The Problem</i>	Theological Term	Its Transmission	Its Remedy	Christ’s Immunity
We <i>have</i> sinfulness	Imputed Sin	Credited to our account from our representative head	Justification: sin transferred to Christ’s account and Christ’s righteousness imputed to our account	God’s appointment of Christ as the “Second Adam”
We <i>are</i> sinners	Inherited Corruption	Physically inherited from Adam in the sin nature possessed by all new persons (traducianism)	Definitive Sanctification: The decisive breach with sin and the death of the old man	The Virgin Birth (no new <i>person</i> ergo no <i>sin nature</i>)
We <i>commit</i> sins	Unrighteousness, transgressions, lawlessness, etc.	The inevitable, recurring product of the sin nature	Regeneration: The impartation of a new nature	No sin nature

B. The Nature of Sin

1. The Root of Sin

Sin is *not*, as some suppose, mere “privation,” or the absence of obedience, the absence of thankfulness, or the absence of *love* (Augustine) and *justice* (Anselm). The Reformers abandoned this understanding, following John Calvin’s emphasis on *pravity* (corruption) over and against the Romanist view of sin as *privation* (loss).

As such, the essence of sin is the antithesis of the summary of the divine Law: refusal to love God supremely. More than a mere lack of love, however, sin shifts the object of love to self as the arbiter of right and wrong, acting strictly on one’s own self-interests, and eschewing all other claimants to authority. All sins can be traced to the root problem of rebellious autonomy.

(1) Love for God is the essence of all virtue.

Mark 12:29–30—The foremost commandment of all is, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

(2) Love of self is the essence of all vice.

Romans 1:21–25—For even though they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, and of birds, four-footed animals, and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.

2. The Expression of Sin

a. Sin is expressed in man’s being.

Sin is more than what people *do*. Sin is a state of being. God requires us to be holy not only in action, but also in disposition or state.

(1) Sin is depicted as existing in the soul prior to our consciousness of it, and awakened by the moral law of God.

John 8:34—Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.

Romans 7:7–11—I would not have come to know sin except through the Law; but sin, taking opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind; for apart from the Law sin is dead. I was once alive apart from the Law; but when the commandment came, sin became alive and I died; and this commandment, which was

to result in life, proved to result in death for me; for sin, taking an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.

(2) Sin is predicated of man's *pre-conscious* nature.

Psalm 51:5—Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.

Jeremiah 13:23—Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

Men are first liars, and then they lie; they are first thieves, and then they steal; they are first perverts, and then they engage in perversion; they are first “effeminate,” and then they engage in homosexuality (1 Cor 6:9). It is part of their sin nature, but it in no way exonerates them.

Question: Is it possible for people to be born with a propensity to specific sins?

That people are born with the propensity to general sinning is universally true (Rom 5:12–19). Whether they may be born with genetic inclinations to specific sins (say, alcoholism, gluttony, homosexuality, worry, etc.) is difficult to prove, but there is no theological reason why this could not be so. We know from Scripture that people are born with the tendency to lie (Ps 58:3), from science that babies may be born sharing a mother's addictions, and by observation that certain sins are clustered in families (though this may be due as much to nurture as to nature).

What we may not concede, however, is that sin habits received by inheritance are for that reason any more tolerable. There may be greater room for sympathy in such cases, but never tolerance. Nor, in fact, may we counsel people “born” with sinful tendencies or orientations to accept their condition and resolve merely not to *act* on those tendencies (i.e., to be a celibate homosexual). Scripture is emphatic that both sin acts and the dispositions that prompt those acts are alike objects of mortification. With Matthew 5 as our guide, we know that it is wrong not only to commit *murder* but also to be *hateful*; it is wrong not only to commit *adultery*, but also to be *lustful*; it is wrong not only to commit *theft*, but also to be *envious*. And, by extrapolation, it is wrong not only to commit *homosexual acts*, but also to be *gay*. It matters not whether a person is born oriented to specific sins.

It is surely true that Christians may continue to struggle long with dispositional sins; we must, however, affirm relentlessly that sinful dispositions may and must be overcome *because we are “men made new,” with the power resident within us not only to become holy in action, but also to be new in essence*. We are by definition no longer what we were, but rather are *Christians*. We may have *been* sexual deviants, idolaters, adulterers, prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, drunkards, slanderers, or swindlers (1 Cor 6:9–10), but we are no longer (v. 11). These sins may and must not ever define believers. A believer may struggle with the urge to steal, but he may never self-identify as a “Christian thief.” A believer may struggle with illicit sexual thoughts, but he may never self-identify as a “Christian pervert.” A believer may struggle with homosexual thoughts, but he may never self-identify as a “gay Christian.”...even if those struggles exist at the genetic level.

(3) Sin is predicated of the *unconscious nature*: one is culpable even for sins done unintentionally, ignorantly, or without nefarious intent.

Psalm 19:2—Acquit me of *hidden* faults (i.e., faults to which I am oblivious).

Ezekiel 45:20—Atonement was necessary for *unintentional* sins and sins done in *ignorance* (cf. Heb 9:7).

Luke 12:48—The one who *did not know it*, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few lashes [but he still receives a few].

(4) Sin is predicated of the *heart*.

Jeremiah 17:9—The *heart* is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.

Matthew 15:18–19—But the things that proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and those defile the man. For out of the *heart* come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders.

Hebrews 3:12—Take care that there not be in you an evil, unbelieving *heart*.

(5) Sin is predicated of the *thoughts*.

Exodus 20:17—Coveting

Leviticus 19:17—Hatred

Matthew 5:27–29—Lust

Note also the proportion of sins of the mind in Paul’s various “sin lists” (Rom 1:29–32; 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:19–21; etc.)

(6) Sin is predicated of failures in intention and motivation

Romans 1:21—*Thanklessness* is the first in the train of sins that men commit.

Romans 14:23—Whatever is *not of faith* is sin.

Matthew 5:21ff

Note: When establishing the sinfulness of people in gospel presentation, we tend to focus on sin as *act*: they lie, cheat, steal, disobey, etc. But this is an incomplete picture of sin, and tends to address aspects of sin that unbelievers *can* and *do* experience success in suppressing by their own effort. It is better to present a more complete picture of sin that includes not only *sins*, but *sin* and *sinfulness*.

b. Sin is expressed in man’s actions.

That sin exists in the mind prior to the commission of acts of sin does not mean that deliberate sinful acts are equal to sins of the mind. Sins of the mind graduate to sins of the flesh that are worse than sins that remain in the mind. Romans 1:24 indicates that sins of thought and affection, long cultivated, result in God’s “giving men over” to sins of greater censure.

(1) Sin includes what man *does* in violation of God’s Law.

1 John 3:4—Sin is lawlessness.

(2) Sin also includes what man *fails to do* in violation of God’s Law.

1 Samuel 12:23—Far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.

James 4:17—Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

X. The Origin of Sin in the Universe

A. The origin of sin in individual men is the sinful hearts with which they are born.

Mark 7:21–23—From within, *out of the heart of men*, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.

James 1:13–15—Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and he himself does not tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed *by his own lust*. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

There are admittedly inducements to sin from without (Satan, peer temptation, etc.), but these all interact with the internal sin nature that enslaves the natural man.

B. The origin of sin into the human race is the sin of Adam.

Romans 5:12–21—Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.... Death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam.... By the transgression of the one the many died.... Judgment arose from one, resulting in condemnation.... By the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one.... Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.... Through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners.

It is because of Adam that all persons born in his lineage and likeness have a sin nature and commit sins. See below for the details of sin’s imputation and inheritance.

C. The direct origin of sin into the universe is the sin of Satan.

John 8:44—He is a liar and the father of lies.

1 John 3:8—The devil has sinned from the beginning.

D. The decretal origin of sin in the universe is the will of God.

Ephesians 1:11—[God] works all things after the counsel of his will.

Lamentations 3:38—From the mouth of the Most High both good and ill go forth.

Proverbs 16:4—The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil.

God is not the *direct* cause of sin (Job 34:10, 12; Jas 1:13; 1 John 1:5). It is inaccurate to speak of God as sin’s creator or as coercing men to sin. Nonetheless, it is accurate to say that God *created* free agents capable of sin and *decreed* that they would sin. Many prefer to say that God merely “permitted” sin as part of a theodicy that insulates him from culpability for sin, but this is not necessary, and actually hints of contingency and openness in the universe (i.e., that there exist in the universe forces outside of God to which he makes concessions). The introduction of sin was part of God’s eternal decree to bring him the greatest possible glory—sin did not take God by surprise.

Question: Why does a holy God tolerate evil in his universe?

God does not offer a comprehensive answer to this question. He does explain why he allows *certain* evil deeds in his universe, and the reasons he gives can help us understand why other evils persist in the universe, but a complete answer is not forthcoming.

- Joseph’s brothers meant their actions as evil, but God used that evil act for a greater good (Gen 50:20).
- God used the evil apostasy of Israel as a means to extend salvation to the Gentiles (Rom 11:11–12, 15, 25, 30)
- A man born blind was rendered so in order “that the work of God might be displayed in his life” (John 9:3)
- Romans 9 suggests that sin allows us to know the full extent of the mercy, grace, and love of God on one hand, and the full extent of God’s holiness, righteousness, and power on the other. God is described as preparing “objects of wrath” for the purpose of making his attributes of greatness known (e.g., his “wrath [holiness] and power) as a contrast to the display of his attributes of goodness (e.g., love and mercy).

Ultimately, while God gives us glimpses into his reasons for *specific* sins, his reasons for sin in general are not fully revealed. We ultimately do not know why God allowed sin into the world. All we can say with certainty is that *God decreed sin*, that *it was right for him to do so*, and that *it was best that he did so*. To these truths we must submit in the absence of a more satisfying answer.

XI. The Imputation of Adam’s Guilt

Just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.... Just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous (Rom 5:12, 18–19)

A. The Sin of Imputation

In Rom 5:12–19, the *one* sin of the *one* man *immediately* inculpated the whole race: all humanity is held guilty of Adam’s sin. We did not *actually* sin in Adam (it is the “one man” who sinned—vv. 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19); still, as verse 12 intimates, the legal effect

is that “all sinned.” No other conclusion can be drawn than that the whole race was somehow inculpated in the representative sin of Adam at the very moment he sinned:

B. The Union of Imputation

The biblical description of imputation is *representative* (not seminal). God appointed Adam to act as the representative for humanity and that the guilt of his representative sin was judicially charged to the entire human race. Note the following:

1. Representation accounts for the choice of the legal term “impute” in Romans 5:13 (cf. Phlm 18, the only other biblical use of the term: “if Onesimus owes you anything, *charge it to my account*”).
2. The representative model alone successfully accounts for the parallelism between Adam and Christ.

Romans 5:14—Adam...is a pattern for him who was to come.

Romans 5:12, 18—Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,...even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men.

Romans 5:15—If by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.

Romans 5:17—For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:19—As through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one the many will be made righteous.

There can be no question that Christ’s relationship to the redeemed is that of **vicarious representation**: Christ’s death substituted for the death that should have been ours; the “alien” merit of his righteous life was granted to us (cf. Phil 3:9; Rom 1:17; 1 Cor 1:30). Paul’s argument is that both Christ’s headship and Adam’s must be the same:

3. The representative model alone accounts for Christ escaping original sin. He escaped the sin *nature* via the virgin birth; he escaped sin’s *guilt* by his legal appointment by God as the Second Adam.

C. The Immediacy of Imputation

Guilt is not passed down or suspended until humans engage actively in sin. It is received immediately and automatically at conception.

1. The Immediacy of Death

Romans 5:12—Just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, so death spread to all men.

Romans 5:15—By the transgression of the one the many died.

Romans 5:17—By the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one.

Just as there was no medium between Adam's sin and *his* death, so also there is no medium between Adam's sin and *our* death. The grammar is explicit. Paul does not say that *just as Adam sinned and died, so also we sin and die*; instead he says that *just as Adam sinned and he died, so also Adam sinned and we die*. The grammar does not allow for mediate imputation.

2. The Immediacy of Condemnation

Romans 5:16—The judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation.

Romans 5:18—Through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men.

The point again is not that each person is condemned after individually committing one sin, but that all persons are condemned because of the one sin of Adam.

3. The Immediacy of Sinfulness

Romans 5:19—As through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners.

All people were rendered ontological sinners based on the sin of one man. Man sins because he is sinful; he does not sin in order to become sinful (see above).

4. The Analogy of Christ's Righteousness.

A person is not regarded as righteous based on an act of his own righteousness; he is regarded as righteous because of his union with Christ, whose independent act of righteousness is credited to his account, rendering him justified. This is the point of the entire passage.

D. Summary

Man *is* a sinner; he does not *become* a sinner at the point of moral agency. Immediate imputation of sin necessarily occurs at the moment of personhood or else the possibility of justification is compromised. Apart from an affirmation of the justice of sin's immediate imputation, there can be no legitimate affirmation of the justice of the imputation of Christ's righteousness.

E. The Solution to Imputed Guilt: Justification by grace alone, through faith alone, in the finished work of Christ alone.

XII. The Extent of Sin on the Human Race

Sin has completely penetrated the human race. Not only has the whole race been touched by sin, but sin has wholly permeated each individual in the human race. The spread of sin could not be more pervasive.

A. The Universality of Sin on the Human Race

1 Kings 8:46—There is no man who does not sin.

Psalm 14:1–3—There is no one who does good. The Lord has looked down from heaven upon the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. They have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one.

Psalm 143:2—In your sight no man living is righteous.

Ecclesiastes 7:20—There is not a righteous man on earth who does good and never sins.

Romans 3:10–20—There is none righteous, not even one. There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God. All have turned aside, together they have become useless. There is none who does good, there is not even one.

Romans 3:23—All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Romans 11:32—God has shut up all in disobedience.

Galatians 3:22—The Scripture has shut up everyone under sin.

1 John 1:8—If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves.

B. The Total Depravity of the Human Race

1. Negatively, total depravity does not mean that...

- a. the unregenerate are never disposed to do any righteousness.

All humans are equipped with a conscience that encourages them to obey God, and even the most degenerate sometimes adhere to it.

Romans 2:14–15—Gentiles...do instinctively the things of the Law.... They show the work of the Law written in their hearts.

Luke 11:13—You, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children.

- b. the unregenerate never do any things that corresponds to God's standards.

Matthew 23:23—The Scribes and Pharisees “tithed mint and dill and cummin,” things that they “should have done.”

Even though the righteousness of the unregenerate is “as filthy rags” (Isa 64:6), it is still classified as *righteousness* because it corresponds, at least externally, to the expectations of God.

- c. the unregenerate are deprived of all natural ability or of “free will.”

As noted above in our discussion of the freedom of the will, freedom has not been lost in the fall. Freedom is essential to personhood and to the image of God in man and to the justice of God's wrath. While his *natural ability* to make choices remains intact, however, the natural man uniformly chooses to act sinfully because of the *moral bondage* that is his by depravity.

- d. the unregenerate are as bad as they can possibly be.

2 Timothy 3:13—Evil men will proceed from bad to worse.

2. Positively, total depravity means that...

a. Sin has penetrated and affected the whole of man's being, without exception.

- The Body

Ephesians 4:19—They have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

Titus 3:3—We also once were enslaved to various lusts and pleasures.

- The Will

Jeremiah 13:23—Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard its spots? Neither can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil.

John 8:34—Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.

- The Affections

Genesis 8:21—The intent of man's heart is evil from his youth.

Jeremiah 17:9—The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?

- The Mind

Romans 8:7—The mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so.

Titus 1:15—To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled.

Ephesians 4:17–18—The Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them.

b. The unregenerate have the capability of committing the worst of sins

Romans 1:18ff; 3:9–21 catalog the potential of man's sinfulness.

c. When the unregenerate do righteous deeds (i.e., that which conforms to the divine standard), they do so for untoward purposes. Their "righteousness" is in the realm of form only, never substance, and is thus not meritorious.

Isaiah 64:6—All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

Matthew 6:5—You pray...in order to be seen by men.

Proverbs 21:4 (NKJV)—A haughty look, a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked are sin.

2 Timothy 3:5—Men hold to a form of godliness, but have denied its power.

d. The unregenerate person has no means of recovery, no ability to please God, and no desire to make overture to God for deliverance—**Total Inability.**

Matthew 19:25–26—“Who, then, can be saved?” Jesus said to them, “With men this is *impossible*.”

John 6:44, 65—*No one can come* to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.... *No one can come* to me unless it has been granted him from the Father.

John 14:17—The world *cannot* receive the Spirit of Truth.

Romans 8:6–8—The mind set on the flesh is death,... because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; it does not subject itself to the law of God, *it is not even able to do so*. Those who are in the flesh *cannot please God*.

1 Corinthians 2:14—A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he *cannot* understand them, because they are spiritually appraised.

1 Corinthians 12:3—*No one can say*, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 2:1, 8—You were *dead* in your trespasses and sins,... by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

3. The Solution to Depravity: Regeneration.

Ephesians 2:1–5—As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions.

Implication for Sanctification in Community: As detailed in the opening four weeks of this course, the solution to indwelling sin and sinning is *not* justification, While we surely do not want to minimize the wonders of Christ’s justifying work, it is not justification, but regeneration that supplies the engine for sanctification. And in fact, having this new nature, Peter tells us, gives us “everything necessary for life and godliness” (2 Pet 1:3–4). In regeneration we not only “escape the corruption that is in the world,” but, amazingly, we are made to be “partakers of the divine nature” (cf. 1 Cor 2:14–16). It is for this very reason that *all* of us in our regenerate community (the church) are able to “with great effort add to our faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love” (i.e., advance in sanctification) and by “doing these things... make our calling and election sure” and “receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”