

Back to the Basics

HIDE AND GO SEEK

Most of us have been in a class, workshop, seminar or something similar where the instructor/facilitator announced that, “We will begin with introductions.

Everyone please stand up and tell us who you are and a little bit about yourself.”

Sometimes we are asked to share a hobby, interest, or favorite memory.

Depending on the venue, you may expound upon your education, where you came from, your previous jobs or your favorite sports team. I believe I am safe in saying that you have rarely introduced yourself as a follower of Christ. Yet, that is what is supposed to be the most important thing in our lives. OK, that was hitting below the belt – I’m sorry, I shouldn’t pick on you like that. After all, I will be the first to tell you that, like Paul, I believe myself to be the chief of all sinners. So I certainly have no room to talk. If you think about it, not introducing ourselves as believers is a sin of omission since Scripture clearly tells us to be bold witnesses and not to be ashamed of our relationship with Jesus. We are actually hiding the best thing we have going for us – the only thing of which Paul said, “We should boast.”

Now, just in case we don’t feel bad enough for not taking the opportunity to publicly proclaim a good thing – our faith; I have some more bad news for you...we probably also failed to mention that we are totally depraved. Somehow, that one inherent characteristic which we have all shared since Adam’s world-changing decision to rebel against God fails to get prominent mention in our introductions. But, then again, I guess there is some logic to not mentioning our total depravity during introductions since EVERYONE shares the same characteristic. It would be kind of like saying, “Hi, my name is Silver and I’m a

homo sapiens.” That is normally assumed (although I have heard of instances involving mother-in-laws where there was some questioning of the species...).

Sadly, whether we choose to admit it or not, mankind, each and every person born since Adam and Eve’s exercise of their free will to blatantly disobey God and take fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, has been born totally depraved.

Since I will be talking about depravity, it is important that we have a common understanding of the term. Webster says *depraved* means *marked by corruption or evil, perverted, crooked*. It’s important to note that this is an INTERNAL disease; you can’t detect it from the outside. Most of us don’t *look* depraved. We mostly do a wonderful job of covering up our depravity. But, don’t be fooled – deep down inside, there is this disease which eats away at us and pollutes our thoughts, our words, our relationships and our actions.

Today I want to take just a few minutes to talk about the doctrine of total depravity (our sin nature) and what that means to us. To do this, I want to provide you with a little Biblical History of Depravity. Then I am going to address what total depravity is and is not. And finally, a light at the end of the tunnel.

Last week we studied the Creation story and noted that God’s crown Jewel of Creation was mankind. We were the ONLY created being God made in His image. Part of being made in the image of God was that He gave us free will. The right to choose to do right or wrong. We also noted that God gave Adam only one negative command: not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. It was a clear, non-negotiable command with a clear and unquestionable consequence: “you will surely die.” The original story of innocence and beauty becomes a study in selfishness and tragedy beyond this warning. Genesis 3 is

familiar to all of us as it relates to the temptation in the Garden which culminates in verse 6. Would someone please read Genesis 3:1-6?

Notice the words, “she took of its fruit and ate; and she gave some also to her husband, and he ate.” That’s where all our troubles began. And the root word for all our troubles? Depravity. Up until then, nothing but innocence was flowing through the bloodstream of mankind. There was the uninterrupted communion with The Living God. There was unguarded relationship, the joy of His presence, and familiar friendship. There was an absence of rebellion, selfishness, defensiveness, and embarrassment. Then it all came to a tragic end.

At that horrible moment the original couple yielded to temptation, depravity entered and contaminated the human bloodstream. Instead of the mind being clear and full of the knowledge of God, it became clouded. And instead of possessing that once strong love for God, man became resentful of God, an emotional wreck...fragile and weak. And the will, once obedient, became rebellious. The disease continues today. We fight with God, reject His truth, and delight in doing what WE want to do. And to make matters worse, instead of facing it, we try to cover it up! It all goes back to the original scene.

Let’s look at verse 7, “Then the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked...” Until then they did not even know they were naked. They lived together in perfect and unpretentious innocence. But, immediately after eating the fruit, they became, *self-conscious*. They knew they were naked. And they did the most natural, human thing to do – they covered up! Verse 7 continues, “and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves apron-like girdles.” But that is just the beginning of their hiding, verse 8 tells us, “And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and

his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.” As a result of becoming self-conscious, there was an immediate cover-up, personally. And there was a hiding from the Creator, relationally. We still practice this cover-up.

Let’s look at verses 9 and 10. “But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, Where are you? He said, I heard the sound of You [walking] in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself. First, I’d like you to understand that God knew EXACTLY where Adam was – don’t be confused by believing that God’s question in verse 9 was a request for Adam to show God where he was. The question implies, “Why are you where you are? What are you doing there? You’ve never hidden from me before. Then, Adam’s reply shows two brand new statements: I was afraid, and I was naked. In verse 11 God starts handing Adam rope to see what he’ll do with it by asking how Adam knew he was naked and if Adam had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Yep- you guessed it; Adam used the rope to hang himself. In verse 12, Adam comes clean – sort of. He confesses to his transgression only it is preceded by a dual-sided excuse. “And the man said, The woman whom You gave to be with me—she gave me [fruit] from the tree, and I ate.” God doesn’t argue.

He faces Eve next who must have been shaking in her apron, ¹³ “And the Lord God said to the woman, What is this you have done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled (cheated, outwitted, and deceived) me, and I ate.” And the blame game continues. We will do ANYTHING on earth to keep from saying, “I am responsible, no one else.” Fact is, we LOVE substitutes. We will do ANYTHING to keep from saying “I have sinned.” We’ll cover up, hide, rationalize, and blame someone else. But, in the end, they admitted their sin and the curse which God

promised Adam in Genesis 2:17 came to pass. That curse is still with us today, it is what makes us totally depraved.

The doctrine of total depravity has suffered from many misconceptions for the average person would define total depravity as being as bad as he can be. However, the doctrine of total depravity really means that we are as bad off as we can be. There is a big difference. The doctrine of depravity has to do, not with man's estimation of man, but of God's estimation of man. We are the product of generations of the teaching of evolution which sees man in an ever-ascending spiral, rising higher from the depth from which he began until finally reaching the stars. We have come somehow to feel that there is so much good in the worst of us that man is not so bad off after all. When we measure men by man, we can always find someone who is lower than we are on the moral and ethical scale, and the comparison gives us a feeling of self-satisfaction. But, the Scriptures do not measure men by man; they measure men by God who created them. The creature is measured by the Creator and found wanting. Someone has suggested that, "If depravity were blue, we'd be blue all over." Cut us and we'd bleed blue, cut into our minds and you'll find blue thoughts, cut into our hearts and there are blue emotions of hatred, revenge and blame. Cut into our wills and you'll find blue decisions and responses.

The tragedy is, we don't *look* blue! We look good, almost white at times. We look clean. We are among the beautiful people. But, there is something deep within that is depraved. It's called our nature. That is why we *can't* clean up our act. We *can't* handle our own lust. We *can't* say no to certain temptations. We *can't* keep our promises. If we are going to have control over all this it must come from *outside* ourselves!

Cain couldn't stop either. Let's look at Genesis 4:8, "⁸ And Cain said to his brother, Let us go out to the field. And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him." Why? Because mentally, his mind was depraved. Emotionally, he was insanely jealous. By Choice, he was defiant. Spiritually, he was dead. Cain was totally depraved.

Ok, so Adam and Eve were depraved and Cain followed his parents' lead. Why does that mean that everyone else in history contracted the disease? The answer lies in Genesis 5:1, 3: This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. ³ When Adam had 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.

Look! In verse 1...in the likeness of God (when God made Adam). A little later, ...in his own likeness, (when Adam and Eve had a child). When Eve gave birth, it was in Adam's likeness, not God's. Why? Because depravity had flooded humanity and polluted the innocence and it never stopped. It is not limited to Adam and Eve. It is not limited to the OT. Let's consider Paul's words in Romans 3: 9-12. "⁹ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written,

"There is none righteous, not even one;

¹¹ There is none who understands,

There is none who seeks for God;

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become useless;

There is none who does good,

There is not even one.”

Sadly, mankind’s total depravity is here to stay. Paul again reminds us of the curse in Romans 5:12, “¹² 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—

Now here’s our problem. We suffer from the very same disease as did Adam, Eve, Cain and everyone since then. The Bible is old, but it is not out of date. The story may be told in ancient terms, but its message is still true; still relevant. We’ve got the disease, the same root problem – depravity. And the root problem yields fruit – sinfulness – sinful thoughts, sinful words, and sinful actions. There is nobody on earth who can help us. We are not unlike Humpty Dumpty...all the king’s horses...

We need help. We need somebody to put us together again. Just when it all looks bleak and hopeless, Romans 5:17-19 provides the light at the end of the tunnel, 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.

¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For 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.”

Isn’t that good news? There is someone to whom we can turn. You won’t find anybody on earth who qualifies as a sinless sacrifice. Being such a sacrifice requires perfection. We can reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. To change the terms of the philosopher I quoted last week;

“Wherever there is sin, there must have been a preceding sinner. And where there is a sinner, there must be a Savior. And there is. Amen.