

The Doctrine of Depravity

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 22 July 2012

Preacher: Tom Holland

[0:00] I want to speak this evening to you concerning the doctrine of depravity.

The doctrine of depravity of the human race.

We see it all around us. I've seen it for 41 years and what I do, man's inhumanity to man is deepening and even accelerating.

Fresh on our hearts tonight is this horrible tragedy in Aurora, Colorado. Sadly, we have had similar events before. We will have them again until Jesus comes.

There is always one question that arises when a tragedy of this magnitude strikes our nation or the world. And I'm hearing it. I'm hearing it by the TV reporters. And I'm hearing it by the politicians.

[1:14] Where was God? Where was God? Where was God in Aurora? Where was God when the Twin Towers fell in New York City? Where was God when just down the road here the Murrah Building blew up?

And so it goes. I'm going to cough and you guys are going to hear it. Excuse me. I will tell you where God was during those events.

He was precisely where people wanted Him to be. That's where God was at. For some, He was in the center of their life and on the throne of their heart.

For others, He was far away, having been rejected and spurned and mocked. God is precisely where He should be during all of life's tragedies.

The problem is the sin nature. The human heart is deceitful and desperately wicked. Who can know it? All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

[2:26] There is none who does good, not even one. And so it goes. I do have an observation. I do not believe that we have ever fully grasped the depth of the fall of mankind.

We have never plumbed its depths. What really happened in the garden that so polluted the human race down to this very moment?

You have to remember, as a race of people, we were not merely wounded in the garden. We couldn't put a Band-Aid on the problem and see it go away.

The human race died. We are dead in trespasses and sins. It's from the very moment our first parents chose this path of disobedience.

This death was spiritual, and it meant we became separated from God. He who is holy would not have communion with that which was unholy.

[3:35] This separation occurred immediately with Adam and Eve. They tried to hide from God in the garden. They were further separated when they were banished from the garden. And in fact, the garden was removed from the earth.

It disappeared. The sin nature within the human family began to manifest itself in unimaginable ways. And I mean immediately.

When Adam and Eve had two sons, there was a murder. Cain killed his brother Abel. Within ten generations, God destroyed the entire human race on earth, sparing only Noah and his family.

Only a few generations after the ark, we see God coming down and confusing the language of the people. So great was their sin. And so it has gone down through the ages.

Our sin nature has touched everything. It has polluted the human race down to this very day. It is safe to say that in the garden, a war broke out between God and man and Satan.

[4:51] Again, this war has raged for generations and millennia. It is raging still. Billions have fallen in this war. Examine for a moment what God has done for us.

He called out a people, the Hebrews, for himself. And they sinned. Remember when they left Egypt? What, have you brought us out here to kill us?

We don't have any water. We don't have any food. We're tired of quail. What's this manna? What is it? That's what manna means. There was this continual grumbling of sin. And in fact, the Scriptures say those that were 20 years and older fell in the wilderness.

Their bones were bleached white by the sun in the wilderness. He then gave them His law and they sinned even more. He sent prophets and they killed them.

He sent His Son and we, the human race, crucified Him. And so it is gone. Does mankind have any hope?

[5:55] Can we extricate ourselves from the sin problem? This has been asked through the ages. And it was especially on the mind of the man that would become the great reformer of the church that God used to reform the church, a man by the name of Martin Luther.

Whether you know it or not, we are a product, Highland Park, of God's work that He did through Martin Luther. That Reformation came to Northern Europe.

America is an extension of Northern Europe. You remember they came over from Northern Europe? And we are an extension of that. Luther was going to be a lawyer.

That's what we need, another lawyer. Luther was going to be a lawyer. And his father was thrilled at that idea. Just thrilled his dad.

And one day he was traveling through the countryside and a storm came up. And lightning began to strike the ground near Luther. And in fear, Luther threw himself on the ground and said, Lord, if you will spare me, I will join the Catholic priesthood.

[7:12] And God spared him. And Luther was good to his word and he became a Catholic priest. Much to the chagrin of his father, I might say. Well, Luther got involved with the church, the Roman church.

And he witnessed great sins, even among the members of the priesthood. He took a trip to Rome one time and found out that they had brothels designed specifically for the priests.

He was appalled at what he said. It deeply troubled him. He struggled with the sin question and the fall of mankind all the way back in the garden.

And like Job, Luther had a question. Can a man be made right with God? Can men and women be made right with God?

This plagued Luther. He sought an answer. And thinking he could find the answer, he withdrew to a monastery in the German Alps. And there he was going to live out his days in the German Alps.

[8:24] Well, it provided no solution for him and he continued to struggle with sin. At the monastery, Luther and the other young priests were expected to attend confession once a day.

They had to go into confession for absolution. We can only imagine what some of those confessions were. Last night after lights out, I burned a candle under my cover so I could read the Bible.

Well, okay, say this many Hail Marys and you'll be absolved from that sin. Another priest comes in and he says, Tonight at supper I coveted Brother Ralph's mashed potatoes. I mean, how much trouble can you get in in a monastery in 16th century Germany?

You know, you could get in trouble today, but I don't think you'd gotten in a lot of trouble back then. When it was time for Luther to confess, a groan was heard throughout the monastery.

Luther would confess for six hours, eight hours, even ten hours, and once it was recorded that Luther confessed for 15 straight hours.

[9:40] The priests, the fathers that were running the monastery, had to do it in shifts. They would let Luther go for two hours and they'd bring in another priest because the other guy was worn out.

He confessed for 15 hours. He went back to his modest room. Before he even closed the door, he remembered an unconfessed sin. It devastated him.

He returned to the confessional and asked the priest if he could start over. This was Luther. This was Luther. The Catholic fathers running the monastery thought he was a malingerer.

They thought he was trying to get out of work, you know. Didn't want to scrub the floors or whatever they did. And they thought he was just trying to get out of work. But they were wrong. Luther was at war with himself over the sin question.

It plagued him. Luther wanted to know, can a man be made right with God? And one evening in his room, Luther was reading from a scroll the third chapter of Romans.

[10:48] And this is what he read. But now. By the way, do a word study sometime of all the places where it says but now or but God.

Makes a fantastic study. But now, apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe.

Luther was floored. Luther couldn't believe what he had just read. He thought his eyes were playing a trick on him. He'd never been taught this.

He'd never taught... He was never taught this. He had a doctorate. Dr. Luther. He had never heard this. He kept reading that passage over and over.

The righteousness of God. The righteousness of God. For Luther, the light bulb came on. The answer to the sin problem was not man, and it certainly wasn't Luther.

[12:06] The answer to the sin problem was God. He had the answer. And specifically, the answer was that God has provided His own righteousness through faith in Christ Jesus by which to deal with the sin problem.

This was a startling revelation to Luther. And it was not taught. Did you hear that? God does not build a spiritual house based upon our righteousness.

God does not look down and pick people that He says, well, that person's worthy of salvation and I'm going to save him. And we have no worthiness to offer. Instead, He graces His children, the lost and the depravity of sin, with His righteousness.

But now, but now, this is manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is a righteousness that comes down from heaven and is bestowed upon those who receive it by faith.

And so sure is this righteousness that it does not depend upon our faith, but rather upon the faith that God bestows upon us.

[13:26] A very famous passage, Ephesians 2, 8, and 9. You probably have it memorized or you should. For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works so that no one may boast.

Now, what do we know about this righteousness? And sadly for me, happily probably for you, I must hurry through this.

Each point I'm going to make here is a message in itself. And let me complete the passage we're going to look at today. This is what Luther read. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood.

What did Luther discover? What can we discover in those verses? Well, one, this righteousness is apart from legalism.

[14:56] There's no room for legalism in this righteousness. It says, but now apart from the law, the righteousness of God has been manifested.

It's been revealed. Apart from the law. The word but is interesting. It stands between human depravity and our inability to please God and God's own provision of a way to Himself.

But now. But God. The righteousness that saves is apart from laws and rules and regulations and sacrifices and shadows and types.

It is even apart from the Ten Commandments which were not given to save, but to show us our hopeless condition and the need for a Savior.

We need a Savior because we can't live up to the moral law of the Ten Commandments. It drives us to the Savior. Second, this righteousness is built on revelation being witnessed by the law and the prophets.

[16:10] This righteousness is apart from the law, but it is witnessed to by both the law and the prophets. They spoke of the day of Christ and they longed to see it.

The law is a mirror. It shows us our need for Christ. We look into the holiness and the righteousness and the perfection of the law of God and it reflects back upon us and we realize we haven't kept the commandments and we are driven to our knees to seek the one who has kept the commandments. We want to be hidden in Him and the only person that has done that of course is Christ. This righteousness is acquired by faith. Even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul is speaking of the absolute and perfect righteousness of God, not the imperfect righteousness of man. Human achievement can never rise to the level of being joined to God.

We don't get there by human achievement. It can only come through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why human religion, devised systems of religion, is such a depravity before God.

[17 : 30] Man imagines he is good enough to reach God with his own righteousness yet he has none. The pack is empty. Do you realize in a recent poll 70% of evangelical Christians, and that's who we are, believe that mankind was basically good?

When questioned, they believe we're basically good. What an affront to revealed Scripture. All their works are as a filthy rag before my eyes.

What is saving faith? Well, it is a far cry from what many teach today. It goes beyond simple affirmation or reciting some prayer dreamed up by a man.

Saving faith is a placing of oneself totally in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. It involves the complete person, the will, the emotions, the intellect, and it's a mystery.

when Christ started talking about being born again. That's a Greek word anophant. It really means born from above. A spiritual birth. They said, you know, you must be born from above.

[18 : 39] You must be born again. Today, you know, you read in commentaries and dictionaries what does it mean to be born again? You have this, you know, this flowery, you know, milk and honey.

You've got to do this and this and this and it's all man-centered. Jesus didn't say that. You know how Jesus described it? He said, oh yeah, being born again is like the wind. He said, no one knows where it starts, no one knows where it's going, but it blows.

The Holy Spirit, the wind of the Holy Spirit blows and people get saved. It is a righteousness that is acquired by faith.

It is also a righteousness that is provided for all who believe. For all those who believe, for there is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Anyone who believes will be saved. That word believe is pisteo in the Greek. It means commit their life or trust. It goes beyond mental assent.

[19 : 48] There is no distinction. Rich and poor may come. Black and white may come. Every race may come. People will come from every tribe and tongue and nation. And those who come will in no wise be cast out.

The Lord never casts out one who comes. I always remember the wonderful story of the, back in the 1700s, the Calvinistic Scottish professor in Scotland, you know, and he was teaching a class on evangelism.

And one of his students who was a hyper-Calvinist, he was beyond Calvin, he was a hyper-Calvinist, he said, I will never witness to somebody, what if I witness to one of the non-elect of God?

And that old professor said, son, if you lead one of the non-elect Christ, God will forgive you. Trust me, God will forgive you for doing that. It is for those who believe.

All who believe will be saved. There is no distinction. We all come with one thing in common. We have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God and we need Christ.

[20 : 56] We need Christ. This righteousness is given freely through grace, being justified as a gift by His grace.

What a word. Grace. Being justified speaks of the great doctrine of justification. That is a legal declaration that God makes concerning His children at the moment of rebirth.

That very instant you are justified. God declares us just. You've heard this common phrase related to that, that God treats us in justification just as if we had never sinned.

And I will not dispute that. That is true. But it goes much further than that. After salvation, God treats us as if we were His Son.

He treats us like He treats Jesus. Try and get your hands around that concept. This righteousness is given to us as a gift.

[21 : 59] It is not earned and it is never deserved. We are granted His righteousness by His grace. That is why there is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

That is one of my favorite passages in all the Bible. Many of you have that memorized. But remember, that's only one-third of the verse. Only one-third.

Listen to the entire verse. There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.

Take the totality of that verse. This righteousness is accomplished by redemption. Through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Redemption carries with it the idea of delivering. we have been delivered from the domain of darkness. We have been delivered into the kingdom of light. It also carries with it the idea of a price tag.

[23 : 05] Grace is free but it is not cheap. It costs Christ His life. It's free but it's never cheap. The term redemption was commonly used to describe the freeing of a slave from bondage.

If we are one with Christ, we have been set free from slavery to sin and we have become willing slaves to Christ Jesus.

You want to be in bondage to Christ. His yoke is easy. This righteousness was paid by an atoning sacrifice whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.

faith. Because we have no righteousness of our own, God graciously bestows His righteousness upon us. He does so through the atoning sacrifice of His Son.

This sacrifice was not done in a secret place but publicly on the hill of Calvary. God displayed His Son publicly during Passover as a propitiation.

[24 : 20] Now, propitiation is not a word we use much anymore. It means the appeasement or satisfaction or atoning sacrifice.

When God sees something in us, He is satisfied. When He sees Christ in us, He is satisfied.

When God sees in us His Son, His wrath is appeased. It is set aside. Now, and what is it specifically that God sees?

He sees the blood of the Lamb. The everlasting covenant. The blood covenant. That's what He sees. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.

Remember when the angel of death came to Egypt to kill the firstborn, the Hebrews had been instructed to apply the blood of an innocent lamb on the doorposts and lintel of their homes.

[25 : 23] And when the death angel saw the blood applied, he passed over that home. By the way, that's where we get the word Passover. The death angel passed over that home when he saw that.

When God sees the blood of His dear precious son, applied to the doorpost of your heart, He is satisfied.

His wrath passes over you because the blood of Christ has been applied and He passes over. Now the question this evening though is this, are you covered by the blood of the lamb?

The Hebrews had an innocent lamb. They killed him. It was a picture of the eternal lamb. Are we covered by the blood of Christ? If you were to stand this day before God, would He say to you, I am satisfied.

I have no wrath reserved for you. All of that has been taken and placed upon Christ. my son died for your sins and they have been applied to your account.

[26 : 41] I love the old song, the old account was settled long ago. I love that song. The old account was settled long ago. I hope that your account has been settled.

If you cannot say that with conviction, may I say that you could be in very grave danger because you don't know when the angel of death is going to pass over. You don't know when Christ is going to return.

And if there is any doubt, don't let another moment pass that you don't cast yourself upon the mercy of God found only in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I said this morning, today is the day of salvation. And it's still today. It's still today. today. Thank you.