

Romans 3:9-22 NLT
TULIP- Total Depravity

I have heard it said that no one needs to be told they are a sinner. I beg to differ. If everyone had a keen awareness of their natural separation from God due to their inherited sin nature at conception the world would certainly be a better place.

Psalm 51:5 “For I was born a sinner— yes, from the moment my mother conceived me.” **NLT**

One theologian I am sure would agree with me is John Calvin, the father of Reformed Theology. Arguably there would be no Presbyterian church without John Calvin. It was Calvin who developed the doctrine of total depravity, and it is this doctrine that sets the tone for all of Calvin’s theology, in my view. So, what is it? Total depravity is the idea that sin permeates every aspect of our humanity, making it impossible for anyone to seek God. Thus, salvation and all that follows it is the sovereign work of God in the hearts and lives of those who believe or will believe in Jesus the Christ. Simply stated, we have nothing to offer to God that would make God incline His ear towards us; that would make God show us any favor by any merit of our own. Salvation is completely the sovereign work of God by way of His Son, Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers. Amen, somebody. The question this morning is why we can and should trust this view of Calvin. You guessed it, scripture. Once such text, among many, that make the case for total depravity is Romans 3:9-22. So, in my normal fashion three observations drawn from the text in light of what I’ve shared thus far.

First observation, no one has a leg up on anyone when it comes to God. We are all in the same boat! V9-12, “⁹ Well then, should we

conclude that we Jews are better than others? No, not at all, for we have already shown that all people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are under the power of sin. "No one is righteous— not even one. ¹¹ No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. ¹² All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one." Total depravity is a liberating truth. All human beings are sinners in need of God's grace, in need of God's mercy. No one is in a position to look down on or turn one's nose up at anyone. That's not to say we revel in sin. We don't! But it is to say we must get off our high horses of self-righteousness. All our righteousness is as filthy rags before a holy and just God. No one does good, as Paul explicitly and emphatically makes clear. And so that we are not confused, Paul is speaking of our vertical relationship, not our horizontal relationships. Let us not confuse the human good we do towards one another as that good which pleases God. The only work that pleases God is faith in His Son, Jesus. Apart from faith in Christ everything we do that we deem good is rubbish. It has no eternal value!

John 3:16 "¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." **NKJV**

John 6:29 "Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." **NLT**

Matt 17:4-5 "⁴And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." ⁵He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him."

Second, left to ourselves, we are all capable of the worst of sin. V13-18. *“Their talk is foul, like the stench from an open grave. Their tongues are filled with lies.” “Snake venom drips from their lips.”*¹⁴ *“Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness.”*¹⁵ *“They rush to commit murder.”*¹⁶ *“Destruction and misery always follow them.”*¹⁷ *“They don’t know where to find peace.”*¹⁸ *“They have no fear of God at all.”* The list is exhaustive and if we are honest with ourselves, we find ourselves somewhere in this list, if not in multiple places. Everyone of us has a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in us, a dark side, and maybe old age or our strong wills have made it harder for him to show himself, but he is there. In our own strength the best we can do is resist him, for a time, but in Jesus the Christ we overcome him. Sin is pervasive and no one is his/her own strength overcomes it. Apart from faith in Jesus Christ sin will carry everyone who resides with it to an eternal grave. But thanks be to God that God has come to see about us through the person of Jesus, God incarnate. God has done for us what total depravity has made us incapable of doing. Finding our way back to God. I was blind but now I see. I was lost but now I have been found, by God through the gift of faith in His Son, Jesus!

Eze 36:26-27 ²⁶“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.”²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” **NIV**

Romans 6:22-23 ²²“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.”²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” **ESV**

Col 1:13:14 “¹³For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

Finally, considering our predicament, the only hope we have is Jesus.

V21-22 “²¹But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²²We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.” One must be asking at this point, considering all I have said why would anyone not believe? Why would anyone not turn to Jesus? What keep some on the outside looking in? The answer, “U”. Not you but the “U” in TULIP. You will have to come back next Sunday for that part. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Amen.**