



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Scripture: Various

2000

TULIP Series: Part 1 "Total Depravity"

TRANSCRIPT

I'm beginning tonight, as I guess most of you know, a series on the 'Five Points of Calvinism.' And it's going to be a series that takes us for five weeks, and so we'll cover a doctrine a night. And that will be the procedure for the next five weeks. And I hope it is a helpful series. I think it's a very important series. The doctrines that we will discuss are very fundamental to understanding the Bible and to understanding the Christian life.

But let's begin with a word of prayer and ask the LORD to bless our time together, and then we'll look into His word. Let's pray.

Father, we do thank You for the evening we have together and we pray Your blessings upon it. We look into a subject that is controversial, troublesome to some people, and yet, Father, these are great truths, and very important truths to know and to understand. And so we look to You to bless. We are reminded from the subject we cover this evening that we are incapable of doing anything that pleases You. We're incapable of understanding Your truth. We need Your grace. We need grace to bring us to the Savior. We need grace to keep us in our relationship with the Savior. We need grace to do everything that we do that's pleasing to You, and that includes understanding these things.

And so, prepare our hearts to think, and to think biblically. And we pray that we will do that because the Spirit of God will teach us this evening. We commend our time to You, our time of study, and also our time of prayer, as well. We look to you to bless,

and we pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) In Matthew 23, verse 37, we read the Lord's lament over Jerusalem. It was an emotional lament. He said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling."

Now how do you explain that? How can it be that the long awaited Messiah came to His own people...[And He came in a powerful way, He came in a demonstrative way, He came in a glorious way: He came doing miracles, and not just doing miracles, but teaching, and teaching as no other man had ever taught. They marveled over His words, engaged Him in debate, (His enemies did), and they couldn't frustrate Him or thwart Him. He always had the right answer. He was the perfect man, perfect in thought, perfect in deed]...and yet they were unwilling to come.

Well how do you explain that? Well we could give many different examples outside the Bible, generalize things a little bit, and look at history, (and consider history in light of the evolutionary thought and development of man), and wonder how is it that men have progressed along the way, over the centuries, from say the time of our Lord, and developed in so many ways politically, technologically, and yet we come to the 20th century and it's the bloodiest century in the history of mankind. How do we explain that? I think the answer to all of those questions is that of the subject that we cover this evening, and that is 'Total Depravity'.

This is the first in a series of five lessons on the five points of Calvinism, often remembered by the old acrostic, TULIP. Each letter represents a point of doctrine. 'T' equals Total Depravity. 'U' equals Unconditional Election. 'L' equals Limited Atonement, 'I', Irresistible Grace, and 'P', Perseverance of the Saints. And so tonight we're going to begin at the beginning. We're going to begin with Total Depravity.

But I want to do that by way of a few comments of general introduction to the series. First of all, the title, 'The Five Points of Calvinism', is a misnomer. John Calvin is not the author of the five points. I think they accurately reflect his beliefs, but they were drawn up at the Synod of Dort, a little over 50 years after Calvin died. Calvin died in 1564, and the Synod of Dort met in 1618 through 1619, about 54 years after Calvin's death. So Calvin didn't write up the five points of Calvinism.

And secondly, the number 'five' is misleading. Calvinism is much broader than five points—than five doctrines. It's much more than the doctrine of *predestination*. When people think of Calvin, they often think of *predestination*. And he certainly held to predestination, but you'd be interested to find that it's later on in his *Institutes*, and that it's not the primary doctrine that he centers on. And 'Calvinism' doesn't primarily center on that; Calvinism is as broad as the Bible.

If you read Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, (and I would suggest you do), he didn't write those for scholars. He wrote it for the people in his church, and for the Christian community, to teach them the Word of God. And you'd profit greatly by doing it. It takes careful reading, but it's doable, and I recommend it to you.

And if you do, you'll see that he deals with the whole counsel of God. The first line of the *Institutes* is one of the finest sentences of theology. He wrote, "Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts, a knowledge of God and of ourselves." And from there he develops his theology with the knowledge of the Creator; and then the knowledge of the Redeemer; and then the way we receive grace; and then fourthly, the external means of grace.

It's arranged in four books which deal with a wide area of subject matter: with the Trinity, with faith, with regeneration, with justification, sanctification, the Christian life, the church, the ordinances, baptism, and the Lord's Supper, human government, the second coming...and more. And you'll find that that's true of most reformed or Calvinistic confessions of faith and systematic theologies: They're very broad in their scope.

Calvin did not originate the theology known as 'Calvinism'. It has been said that, 'Calvin no more invented a new teaching than Columbus invented America.' What he did was he expounded the Bible. Calvin is thought of as a politician in some ways—he wasn't that. He's thought of as a systematic theologian—and he was that, but he wasn't just that. In fact, he's also been described as chiefly an exegete.

He was a great exegete for his day, and he taught the Bible. He'd get up in the pulpit and he would preach out of the Hebrew text, or the Greek text, and he could exegete from those texts. He taught sometimes five days a week, and two or three times on Sunday; preaching the Bible and writing commentaries on the Bible.

And as he did that, he taught what he *discovered* in the Bible. And what he *discovered*...he was not the first to discover. He wasn't alone in these discoveries. This isn't the first person, (*i.e. Calvin*), to have discovered 'Calvinism', and isn't the last. Those who read the Bible, and read it carefully, come to these same conclusions. In fact, I think that it's fair to say, a line can be drawn from Calvin to Augustin to the apostles and the prophets. They are in many ways very harmonious with one another. So if, we might ask, there are more points to Calvinism than 'The Five Points of Calvinism', how is it that we have these very famous five points?

Well, in a sense, we can thank the Arminians for them. James Arminius had a group of disciples who became known as the *Remonstrants* —or the *Arminians*, who issued a document called *The Remonstrance*.

It was a protest against the doctrines of the reformed faith, the doctrines of Calvinism, and particularly against the doctrine of *predestination*. They said that, 'The doctrine of predestination is not absolute; it is conditioned on man's response.' And so they said man has a free will; he can choose or not choose God—and God's choice of man depends upon that. They said that everyone can be saved, and Christ died to save everyone. He doesn't save everyone, but He died to save everyone. Everyone can be saved—and everyone can be lost for that matter. Your salvation is not certain until you finally come to the end. So to that degree they agreed with the Roman Catholics.

Well, at the Synod of Dort, which convened at Dordrecht in Holland in the year 1618 and 19, these matters were reviewed—and they were condemned as heresy. And the response of the Synod was to issue *The Canons of Dort*, which answered the Arminians in five points. It's not all that there is to the reformed faith, as I said; but having said that, each point of these five points is extremely important. And a right understanding of them is necessary for a correct theology—and I would say, for a doxology, for a glorification of God.

Really, I think that we can reduce Calvinism to one point, or one simple statement, and that's the statement that Jonah made at the end of Jonah, chapter 2, "Salvation is of the LORD." That's what Calvinism, or Augustinianism, or the reformed faith is all about—*Monergism*. That's a good word. You may not be familiar with it, but it's a word that comes from *mono*, which means 'one', and *erg*, which means 'work'. And it means 'one work'; God's work. —He does it all. "Salvation is of the LORD." It is all of Him. And that's what Calvinism, (if we want to call it that), or 'Reformed Theology', or 'Sovereign Grace', (which is an even better way of putting it), is all about.

But to understand that, we must first understand the 'T' in TULIP, Total Depravity. Martin Luther, at the end of his classic work, "*Bondage of the Will*", wrote to Erasmus, (to whom the book was addressed), that "This doctrine", (which Erasmus objected to and rejected in his writings), "This work", Luther said, "was the hinge of The Faith; the hinge on which the reformed tradition, the reformed doctrines turn." And I think that's true.

Simply put, 'total depravity' means that our whole humanity is fallen, that man has been totally affected by sin, tainted in our every part; body and soul. Consequently, we cannot do anything that ultimately pleases God; there is no good in man that pleases God.

Now, I didn't say that, 'There is no good in man', but that, 'There is no good in man that pleases God.' And that is a point I think that needs some emphasis, because the term that we're studying, the term of the doctrine, 'Total Depravity', can be

misleading. That the combination of *depravity* with *total* can be confused with 'utter depravity', which suggests that all men, without exception, are monsters. It doesn't mean that. It doesn't mean that all men are equally bad, or that they are as bad as they can be.

I've been reading about Lenin, just, fairly recently. We all know who Vladimir Lenin was: He masterminded the violent revolution that, in many ways, has shaped this century. He had a policy, (having established himself in Russia as the governing authority, and really the dictator of Russia), he had a policy of 'governing by continual terror.'

But even Lenin occasionally interrupted the terror to save the life of someone he knew. That's 'good'. And we say there's 'some good' in him. Even Hitler, for all of his atrocities, spared some French villages at the plea of priest. Even mob bosses take care of their own families. They don't whack their own children, (or at least usually they don't do that).

So not even the worst of men are without some 'goodness'. So it's not true and it's not the meaning of the doctrine of Total Depravity, that there is absolutely no good in any person; or that, all do the very worst that they could do.

But that's only because of God's grace, His common grace, which restrains the evil that is in every man—and also enables man to do the good that he does. (I'm using 'man' generically. I don't want you ladies to feel like you're being left out when I say *man* or *men*. You're just as bad as we are.) It may not seem like it, but I'm speaking generically. We're all that way. And we would be all worse, and we would be utterly bad, and utterly the worst that we could be were it not for common grace that restrains man and promotes the good.

And the recognition that, 'There is some good in everyone, that man is not utterly depraved', really gives little consolation in light of what the Bible does say about man's condition and what Total Depravity does mean.

I think that perhaps one of the best texts for us to start out with is Romans chapter 3, verses 10 through 12. You've got your Bibles, (I hope you do), turn to

Romans 3, and we'll just read some of these verses. We can go beyond verse 12, but Romans 3, beginning with verse 10, Paul writes, "as it is written, 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." (Rom 3:10-12).

John Calvin didn't write that. David wrote it, Paul wrote it, and they wrote it by the inspiration and the direction of the Holy Spirit—and it is a summary of the human condition, which is universally corrupt. Sin has taken everyone captive.

Now that seems harsh. "There is none who does good. There is not even one." And some would even say, 'That doesn't even fit the facts.' We can all think of people who don't think like we do, people who aren't in the church, people who are outside the church—call them 'pagans', call them 'unbelievers'—but people like that who have done very good things. We can think of people like that, can't we?

We may not know people personally who have done heroics, but we know of people who have made heroic sacrifices in times of war, and people who've made generous contributions to charities who are not people that call themselves Christians. And yet they've done these 'good things'.

Sometimes unbelievers actually seem more noble and more generous and more forgiving than Christians do. Christians, (I'm speaking of genuine Christians), can be rather unpleasant people; kind of like those Israelites in the wilderness that were grumbling constantly. We have that in the church. We have that in Believer's Chapel. Sometimes the unbeliever is a person who seems of higher character: They work harder, maybe even more honest than some people who call themselves Christians. So we might wonder, 'Can Paul really say, 'There is none who does good, not even one?' '

Well, we have to understand that Paul is not speaking from the human perspective but from the divine perspective. There is what we can call a *relative good* in everyone. And what we mean by that is, 'Man is good when compared to other men.' But *relative good* is not *fundamental good*. *Relative good* is not *absolute good*.

The ultimate and true standard for 'good' is God—and His law. And we have a summary of His law in Matthew 22, in verse 37, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind." And, 'You're to love your neighbor as yourself.'

Now that second part of the law, that summary of the second table of the ten commandments, probably condemns all of us right there because we don't love our neighbor as ourself. Now we may love our neighbor, but even if some of us could qualify for that, the first statement disqualifies every one of us when we begin to think, 'Do I love God with all my heart, all my soul, all my mind?' We're all in trouble on that one because we don't fit that.

The law of God, the standard of God doesn't merely measure our conduct, it measures our heart—doesn't just look at the outward, it looks at the inward. In fact, that's how God looks at people. He told that to Samuel, when he was searching for a new king—when he was looking at David. Before he met him, God told him that, 'man looks on the outward, I look on the inward.' (1Sa 16:7).

And He knows the hearts. He knows what's in the hearts of everyone. He knows what our motives are, and He knows the reason for the good deeds that men do. And in knowing their hearts, and knowing what's behind their good deeds, He knows their motives, and He knows how impure their motives are. They taint everything. R. C. Sproul wrote, "There is a pound of flesh mixed in with all our good deeds, rendering them less than perfect."

People do good things and they live moral lives for a number of reasons. Philanthropy, giving away large sums of money, is a way to gain recognition; it's a way to gain fame. Doing good things, whatever they may be, like being kind, is a way of gaining acceptance; it's a way of promoting one's self.

It's good for business to be known as a church goer. It's even better for business, I suppose, to be known as an elder or a deacon in the church. And living a law abiding life, and a moral life is good for avoiding all kinds of risks, and dangers, and diseases.

There are reasons for doing things that are self-serving—and those are the motives for them. People can even sacrifice their lives for a noble cause: They can help the poor; they can fight oppression; they can fight disease. They can do all of that and sacrifice their lives, give their time in doing that kind of thing—and not be a believer and not do it for the Lord God. They do it, perhaps, even to soothe their conscious.

Now, in saying all of this, I'm not trying to say that as we look at these people, whoever they may be, that there is no real compassion in any of them, that there's no sense of rightness in them and has as a motive for what they're doing. But God requires motives that are absolutely pure, that measure up with that statement, "Love the Lord your God with all you heart, all your soul, and all your mind." —And people don't measure up to that.

That's God's standard. His standard is pure motives and pure deeds. It's often said, 'God doesn't grade on the curve.' He doesn't deal with us the way we deal with one another; He deals with us according to an absolute standard. He requires absolute conformity to His righteousness; He requires perfection—and no one can give that.

Jesus told the rich, young ruler, "No one is good except God alone." (Mar 10:18). Problem is though, sin has gone to the very core of our being and affected every aspect of life. That's the meaning of Total Depravity. That's how we defined it at the very beginning; it affects every aspect of our being. It is extensive rather than intensive. No, we're not as bad as we can be, but every part of us has been affected by sin. So, the question that a person must answer to understand Total Depravity and to understand man's condition is, 'When man fell, how far did he fall?'

Now the Arminian answers that question differently from the Calvinist, (and this is not to pick on the Arminian). And this is not to say Arminians are not saved; I don't believe that at all and I'm not suggesting that. But Arminianism is what I would call *natural theology*. It's the theology that man has naturally of having human ability and merit—and that has a very strong hold on people naturally.

And so we raise the question, (*about the fall*), because this whole issue has developed historically with the Arminians, and we raise the question because it's a question that needs to be asked: 'Is it correct?'

I'm not judging these people in terms of their relationship with the Lord God, or are they genuinely saved? I accept that many are. John Wesley was a saved man. So was Charles. But is the position they hold true? Is it biblical? And what they say about the fall, or how it could be characterized, is it true?

Edwin Palmer has written a fine book on *The Five Points of Calvinism*, (I don't know if we have it in our book room, but it's one that you might want to read if you are looking for a book on that subject), and he sees the difference between the Arminians' view of the fall and the Calvinist's view of the fall in this way: The Arminian compares the unregenerate man, the fallen man, to a person who has jumped out of a two story building. Well, he lands, and he gets injured. He breaks a leg, or he cracks some ribs, something of that nature, but he's alive, and he can call for a doctor and seek help.

And the Calvinist, on the other hand, would compare the man who is unregenerate, the fallen man, to one who has jumped off the top of the Empire State Building, and is splattered all over the sidewalk. He needs more than a doctor—he needs a miracle. Well, that's very biblical. It's what Paul says in Ephesians chapter 2, in verse 1, "You were dead in your trespasses and sins." He doesn't say, 'You were sick in your sins', or 'You're injured in your sins'. He says, "You're dead" —and 'dead is dead'. Just as some people seem to be more dead than others. And that, perhaps, gives us a little bit of confusion.

When I was in seminary, I had a roommate who had a book of famous photographs from Life magazine. This was back in the early '70s, and I think the book came out in the '60s. And a lot of the photographs were from the '30s and the '40s—and a lot of them were very interesting. There were a lot of war pictures; and one picture, though, stood out in my mind; in fact, it's the only one that I can remember. (Maybe there was that famous kiss between the sailor and the girl on Times Square; that may have been in there.)

But this one picture I remember was of a woman who had taken her own life; and she had done that by jumping off the Empire State Building. She'd fallen on a parked car, and was lying on the crushed top of it. And what was memorable about it ... and I suppose it's the reason that a photograph was taken and it became well known ... was she showed no signs of injury. She was a rather attractive woman. She was well dressed, and she was lying on the car looking just like she was asleep. She looked peaceful—but she was dead.

In many cases that's true of the natural man. He or she doesn't look so bad. They're able to do many things that are good; they're pleasant; they're benevolent; they're *just* in their relationships with their fellow man; they can do what is called, 'civil good', or 'relative good'—and in many ways, as we've said, they can be more admirable than genuine believers.

But all unbelievers are spiritually dead. That's the reason that they cannot do any good toward God. And the reason is, as Paul said, "There is none who seeks for God." And they don't seek for God because they cannot seek for God. They are dead, which means there is no free will.

That's a sacred cow with people, 'Free will'. But there is no free will. Now that ought to be, it would seem to me, (and I think as you think about it, perhaps will seem that way to you as well), that this fact would be self-evident. We cannot, by our own free will, make ourselves more handsome. We cannot, by our own free will, make ourselves great athletes.

You may have sat there before the television, watching the Super Bowl and thought, "I want to do that. I want to be a quarterback like that. I want to be a split end like that. I want to be faster than that guy, and I, by my free will, I'm going to do that!" You can't do that. No one can do that. —And that's obvious.

A young woman may have as her goal to be the president of a corporation. She may work hard. She may be very gifted, but she finds before too long she's reached the glass ceiling. And so physical and intellectual conditions, circumstances beyond our control, make it obvious that there is no free will.

But spiritually the Bible teaches that, in terms of coming to God, there is no free will. Now, that leads to another misconception: That does not mean that people are robots, that man has lost, with the fall, the faculties that make him a responsible moral agent. He has not lost those faculties. He has not lost his powers of reason, he hasn't lost his conscience; he hasn't lost his will. Fallen, sinful man still possess and uses all of these. He has the power to know truth. He has the power to feel affection, to make decisions, and to choose and refuse things freely. So he is responsible.

But every faculty has been infected with sin; and that affects the condition and use of those faculties; it has affected the body. Isn't that obvious? It's obvious to us as we grow older; our body begins to wear out. We reach middle age and we've got to get bifocals. And when you get bifocals, you've got to learn to walk all over again. And then you've got to get hearing aids. Things begin to break down, and eventually we die. That's because sin has affected our body.

But it has also affected the body in the way the body is used. And Paul talks about that in Romans 6:13. He speaks of "...the members of our bodies as instruments...", (or "weapons", it can be translated that), "of unrighteousness." So that the body becomes used in an unrighteous way because sin has not only affected the body, but it's affected the body because it's affected the soul—it's affected the thoughts and the will of man. The inner man has been corrupted by sin.

Now that's the consistent testimony of Scripture. Genesis 6:5, "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." —That's man! Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else, and desperately sick, (or desperately wicked), Who can understand it?"

And that's the way it is from the very beginning. We were born that way. That's what David says, (spoke that of himself, but it's true of all of us), in Psalm 51, in verse 5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me." In the very beginning he was in this condition. Man is born infected with sin. It's like we've gotten a

bad transfusion. It's infected us completely. Sin has attached itself at the very root of man's being and so it affects everything about him.

Well that is his condition: His faculties are still intact; he still has a mind, he still has a will, he still has feelings, and he still has a conscience. But sin has penetrated to the very core of his being. It affects everything about him: The way he thinks, the way he feels, and what he or she does.

A. A. Hodge was the 'Professor of Theology' at Princeton Seminary about 100 years ago. (He's the son of Charles Hodge, who wrote, *The Systematic Theology*.) A. A. Hodge wrote *Outlines of Theology*, and he deals with this aspect of man's condition and how man cannot change his condition; and he wrote, "The permanent affections of the soul govern the volitions," (that is, "govern the will"), "but the volitions cannot alter the affections." What we love, what we desire, affects our will—but our will cannot change what we love; we cannot will to be different.

And man's condition is that he naturally desires to live outside the will and government of God. That's the nature of our heart. By nature, 'We want to break their fetters from us', as they say in Psalm 2, *verse 3*. We want. 'To be rid of God!' We want to be ruling ourselves and not be ruled by God. And so, man cannot desire to be in submission. It is man's nature to be rebellious. The natural man is a fugitive. He's running away from God. He's no more naturally drawn to God than a thief is drawn to a policeman; the natural inclination of a thief is to run from him—and that is the way it is with man.

And we see that from the very beginning, from Genesis chapter 3: When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, what did they do? They fled from God. They tried to hide their nakedness. They tried to hide from God. And God came seeking them; they did not go seeking God. That's the natural man; he does not seek God.

God seeks man. Man does not seek God. He cannot seek God. He does not want to seek God. And so he uses his faculties, his mind, his affections, his will, and they're all used freely—but always used freely to reject God because that is his nature.

Let me illustrate: 2 Peter 2, verse 22, is a verse in which Peter describes apostates. It's not a verse that you hear quoted a lot, or preached a lot, but it's one that once you hear it, you never forget it. He says that the apostates are described according to the proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit, and a sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire." It's pretty disgusting, isn't it? You wonder, 'Who taught them to do that?'

Well, if you've got a dog, as I do, you know nobody taught them to do that. They do that because that's what they are. I've got a great dog. I'm very proud of my dog; I love my dog. In fact, my dog, (he's a Scottish Terrier named Knox), he sits with me every morning, while I read my Bible and peruse the Wall Street Journal. (It's kind of my habit, and he's there with me.) He's a great dog—but he's got terrible habits. I'm not going to tell you his habits, (I think Peter's already put the finger on Knox.) I didn't teach him to do that; he does it by nature. That's the way he is; that's the way a dog acts.

And the same with pigs. Now I haven't spent much time around them, but one time, years ago, when I was in college, I went to a pig farm, and I went out into the pig sty. It was about an acre or two of mud...and the pigs loved it; that's where they wanted to be. Why? Because that's their nature—it's their nature to do that.

You see it throughout the animal world: Cows eat grass. Wolves eat cows. Why? Because it's their nature. Cows don't eat wolves, and wolves don't eat grass because that's contrary to their nature. And that's what Peter is saying about the apostates. These people, who have turned away from the truth, do that because it's their nature to do that. They're acting according to the way they are; to their condition. That's what comes naturally for them.

And that is the way it is with fallen men and women. They sin because it is their nature to do so. The natural man loves sin—and he hates God. You can't love what you hate. And so, by nature, man cannot love God. That's what the Lord taught. He taught that in Matthew 7, verses 17 and 18. He says that, "A good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree

produce good fruit." The condition of the tree is bad, the root is diseased, and so the fruit is inevitably rotten. —It can't be any different.

And it's the same with the natural man. He is corrupt, and therefore he does things that are corrupt. He cannot do good. So Total Depravity is also 'Total Inability'. In fact, some prefer to call this doctrine, 'The doctrine of total inability'.

Now that's certainly the force of our Lord's 'cannot' statements; and best example of that is in John chapter 6, verses 44 and 45. If you have your Bibles open you might turn to that. John 6:44, Jesus said, "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." Verse 65, "And He was saying, 'For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father.' " Man cannot choose Christ. Man cannot come. He cannot take the first step toward God. God must do that. God must "draw him," He says. Now this is not just 'some' people. He's not saying, 'The worst of people cannot come to Me unless they're drawn, or unless it's given to them to come.' This is everyone. "No one can come."

Now Paul teaches the same thing in Romans 8, in verses 6 through 8 where he leaves no room for free will. Romans 8, verses 6 through 8, "When the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace." (vs6). 'The mind set on the flesh', is the natural man, the unregenerate man, the man in unbelief. And 'the mind set on the Spirit', is the regenerated, new creature in Christ. So, the mind set on the flesh is death because, "...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, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (vs7-8).

That is 'Total Inability'. The mind of the natural man is set on the flesh; it's not set on the spiritual things of life; it's not set on God; it's not set on His truth. "That mind," he says, "is hostile toward God." Not neutral, "hostile"—he hates God.

And because he hates God, he cannot be obedient to the law of God. Which takes us back to that statement by Hodge that "The disposition governs the volition."

The desires of the mind control the will and he acts freely in opposition to God.

Man chooses freely to reject and oppose God. He's not coerced in this. He's not made to reject God against his will; he's not made to do anything against his will. He sins and he chooses freely, because it's the nature of his heart. 'His mind...' Paul says, '...is hostile; it does not subject itself...it is not able to.' —That's total inability.

And that's supported in the last statement in verse 8, "Those who are in the flesh cannot please God." That means they cannot believe. That means they cannot exercise faith in their condition, in their own strength. Now think about this for a moment. And I think it becomes obvious that that is exactly what Paul means.

Does faith please God? Well, of course it does: Hebrews 11:6, "Without faith it is impossible to please Him." We can't please Him in any other way. The only way we can please God, is if we have faith—and yet Paul says, 'The natural man cannot please God.' How do we reconcile those two statements?

Well, it means that man cannot have faith, he cannot believe in his 'natural' condition, in his own ability—which is what our Lord said in John 6:44 and 65. "No one can come. No one can come, unless it has been granted from the Father."

Well, that is Total Depravity—which is 'Total Inability'. Much, much more can be said about it than this that I've said tonight—and that will be true of each of the points that we cover in the following weeks.

But very simply, it is to say that, sin has infected the whole man—body and soul. As a result, his mind is darkened; he cannot understand spiritual things; and as a result he cannot desire the good, the ultimate good; he cannot desire God. He cannot 'will the good.' He cannot come to God in his own strength. He is described in the Bible as, 'dead', and 'blind', and 'enslaved to sin'. That's the condition of fallen man. That's the condition of unbelieving man. His condition is helpless.

And it would be hopeless except for God, because what man cannot change in himself, God can change, and does change—which proves Jonah's confession that

"Salvation is of the LORD." It cannot be of man; cannot be of man. If I cannot come on my own, if I'm dead in my sins—but I'm saved, then it's because God did it, and did it all, from beginning to end. "Salvation is of the LORD!"

And we shall see how He accomplishes that salvation in the next four points of the acrostic TULIP. All five points hold together, and they abound to the glory of God—and I think we'll see that in the weeks to come.

(End of Audio)