

Calvinism: Total Hereditary Depravity

Introduction

1. There are many false doctrines in the world today. Often times, people follow them without first doing some serious investigating.
2. This afternoon we are going to study the doctrine of Calvinism and then only one aspect of Calvin's system of theology — that is **"Total Hereditary Depravity."**
3. Calvinism is a system of theology developed by John Calvin who lived from 1509-1564 which greatly influenced denominational teaching since the days of the Reformation movement.
4. **There are 5 aspects of the Calvinistic doctrine as seen here on the chart.**
 - A. Our study this afternoon will deal with the first aspect of Calvinism and then I will deal with the other 4 in future lessons. But one must remember that all of these together make up the overall doctrine of Calvinism.
5. Many denominations today practice this Calvinistic doctrine. Most, but not all, that hold the belief that babies must be baptized do so because they believe in Calvinism.

Total Hereditary Depravity Explained by Calvinists

1. The **Five Points of Calvinism**, by Steele & Thomas, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., page 25 states the following:

- A. **That Man's Nature Is Corrupt Throughout:**

“When Calvinists speak of man as being totally depraved, they mean that man's nature is corrupt, perverse, and sinful throughout. The adjective ‘total’ does not mean that each sinner is as totally or completely corrupt in his actions and thought as it is possible for him to be. Instead, the word ‘total’ is used to indicate that the WHOLE of man's being has been affected by sin. The corruption extends to EVERY PART of man, his body and soul; sin has affected all (the totality) of man's faculties — his mind, his will, etc.”

- B. **That Man Doesn't Have The Ability To Choose Spiritual Good Over Evil.**

“Man did not come from the hands of his Creator in this depraved, corrupt condition. God made Adam upright; there was no evil whatsoever in his nature. Originally, Adam's will was free from the dominion of sin; he was under no natural compulsion to choose evil, but through his fall he brought spiritual death upon himself and all his posterity. He thereby plunged himself and the entire race into spiritual ruin and lost for himself and his descendants the ability to make right choices in the spiritual realm. His descendants are still free to choose — every man makes choices throughout his life — but inasmuch as Adam's offspring are born with sinful natures, they do not have the ABILITY to choose spiritual good over evil. Consequently, man's will is no longer free (i.e. free from the dominion of sin) as Adam's will was free before the fall. Instead, man's will, as the result of inherited depravity, is in bondage to his sinful nature.”

2) Is God depraved?

- a. **We are the “offspring of God” and He is the “Father of spirits.”**

Acts 17:29 "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

Hebrews 12:9 Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the **Father of spirits** and live?

Ecclesiastes 12:7 Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And **the spirit will return to God who gave it.**

3) Do Children of Christians inherit a purified nature?

- a. **If Adam’s posterity inherited the corrupt nature described after the fall, why do not the children of Christians inherit a purified nature after their conversion?**

1 Peter 1:22-23

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the **pure in heart**, For they shall see God.

B. An infant is born without sin.

- 1) **When a child is born it inherits neither sin nor righteousness.**
Ezekiel 18:20
- 2) **The child is pure. Jesus said in Matthew 19:14 “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” If one is totally depraved by inherited sin, then what could be the meaning of this passage?**
- 3) **David understood the eternal safety of an infant because when his child died, he ceased mourning and explained, “I shall go to him...” (2 Sam 12:15-23).**

Man Has Freedom to Choose to Obey or Reject:

1. Under the scope of divine sovereignty God has granted man a free will to choose whether to obey or reject Him.

A. As we mature, we become responsible for our own actions.

1) At birth an infant is not morally responsible for his actions, but as one grows up he reaches an age where he is able “to refuse the evil and do the good.”

Isaiah 7:16 For before the Child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings.

2) In Luke 7:29-30 “The Pharisees and lawyers rejected....”

a. God desired that these men repent and be baptized, but they had the right not to comply, and they exercised it.

3). In Matthew 23:37 Jesus willed to save them: “...How often I wanted to gather your children” but they voluntarily willed to reject: “and you would not!”

B. Justice demands that God judge each one according to his own works.

1) The Jews understood this. They once accused God of being unjust because they thought He held them guilty for what their fathers had done. But notice how the Lord replied:
Ezekiel 18:25-32

2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Romans 14:12 So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.

2) Galatians 6:5 says: "For each one shall bear his own load."

C. Sinful deeds, as well as repentance, are actions performed by responsible choice.

1) Sin is the transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4. We "yield" ourselves to sin.

Romans 6:12-13, 16

2) James 1:13-15 shows us that sin is the result of lust conceived and is not that which can be inherited.

a. The accountable person, the one responsible for their choices can be separated from God.

Isaiah 59:1-2 Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. But **your iniquities have separated you from your God**; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

3) Repentance likewise, must be the choice of one who is brought back into a proper relationship with God.

a. **WHY would God command repentance IF we DO NOT have the ability to choose for ourselves?**

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now **commands all men** everywhere to repent,

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and **let every one of you** be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

1. **Calvinism stands or falls on the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity.**
2. **If the claim is true that man does not have the ability to choose good over evil, then obviously no one could be righteous unless God makes him so.**
 - A. **Such a doctrine not only denies the free will choice of man, it leaves God to blame if anyone is left lost and unchosen by Him.**

Acts 10:34-35 Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God **shows no partiality**. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.

1 Timothy 2:4 "...who **desires all men to be saved** and to come to the knowledge of the truth."

3. **Therefore the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity is false because the doctrine contradicts plain scriptures which teach that each person is responsible for himself before God.**

4. **Jesus said:**

John 12:48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him — **the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day**.

