

Total Hereditary Depravity

by Leon King

Few persons in our day are willing to admit their total hereditary depravity because of Adam's sin. In our natural thinking, we never like to admit that we are totally depraved in all our faculties and rendered unwilling and unable to come to God in ourselves. Galatians 5:19-21 gives a thumbnail description of depraved man. Indeed, this inspired list helps us discern the motions of the carnal man.

Galatians 5:19-21 *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, **20** Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, **21** Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

This is a description of the works which come from the corrupt nature. The depraved nature of man is likened unto a tree which produces fruit. Such persons who are not born from above can produce only the corrupt works described here. This is what all men are by nature - that is, they are that when they are born naturally. Unless God intervenes and gives them a new nature, they can never be any different. Jesus said, "**A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.**" -- Matthew 7:18. He wasn't talking about trees, but was using this as an allegory to describe the two natures of men. The corrupt nature is what men have from their father, Adam. The first two chapters of Romans is a catalog of the depravity of all men. The description touches us all - each and every one!

Romans 1:18-32 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; **19** Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed *it* unto them. **20** For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: **21** Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. **22** Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, **23** And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. **24** Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: **25** Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. **26** For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: **27** And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. **28** And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; **29** Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity;

whisperers, **30** Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, **31** Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: **32** Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans 2:1-16 Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. **2** But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. **3** And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? **4** Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? **5** But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; **6** Who will render to every man according to his deeds: **7** To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life: **8** But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, **9** Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; **10** But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: **11** For there is no respect of persons with God. **12** For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by

the law; **13** (For not the hearers of the law *are* just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. **14** For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: **15** Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) **16** In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

After this description of what all men are, the apostle sums it all up in Romans 3:9-19 to illustrate that all men are guilty before God.

Romans 3:9-19 *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; **10** As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: **11** There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. **12** They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. **13** Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: **14** Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: **15** Their feet are swift to shed blood: **16** Destruction and misery are in their ways: **17** And the way of peace have they not known: **18** There is no fear of God before their eyes. **19** Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

This is the result of depravity. We sin because we are inherent sinners.

When we speak of the total hereditary depravity of man, we do not mean that:

- 1. Men never do earthly good in the eyes of other men.**
- 2. That men do not give up their lives for others in such acts as the three chaplains - in the heat of battle - in rushing to save one from fire, drowning, etc.**
- 3. There are not benevolent acts.**
- 4. That all men are as bad as they could be.**

But, we do mean that:

- Adam voluntarily sinned in the garden of Eden and wrought ruin on all his posterity so that we are depraved in all our faculties. In the natural state before being regenerated, we are spiritually dead, intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally depraved.
- The heathen themselves have acknowledged and lamented the inner depravity of man; they assert, that no man is born without sin; that every man is naturally vicious; that there is an evil disposition, or vicious affection, that is implanted and grows up in men; and that there is a fatal portion of evil in all when born, from whence are the depravity of the soul, diseases, etc. And that the cause of this viciousness is rather from our parents, and from first principles, than from ourselves. Reason confirms it, that so it must be; that if a tree is corrupt, it can bring forth no

other than corrupt fruit; that if the root of mankind is unholy, the branches must be so too; if the fountain is impure, the streams must be so likewise; if immediate parents are unclean, their posterity must be unclean, since a clean thing cannot be brought out of an unclean.

The Scriptures declare this nature to be "the law of sin", a "*law in my members*", "*body of sin*", "*old man*", "*the flesh*", "*lust*" or "*concupiscence*." *The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth*, Gen. 8:21. Men are "*transgressors from the womb*." -- Isa 48:8. We were "*shapen in iniquity; and in sin did our mothers conceive us*."

In the Bible, sins and transgressions themselves are named "*the works of the flesh*," Gal. 5:19; "*the lusts of the flesh*," and "*the desires*" or "*wills of the flesh*," Eph 2:3. They are called the "*deeds of the body*" and sometimes the "*deeds of the old man*;" they are called "*corrupt fruit*;" the deeds proceed out of the heart; for from the heart proceed "*evil thoughts*," etc.

Man is spiritually blind, a captive of his own depraved nature, in bondage to corruption, bruised by the fall of his father Adam coming into the world speaking lies. We sin because it is our nature to sin - there is none good, no, not one - the whole world lies guilty and condemned in the sight of a Holy God.

Adam's sin is called sin (Rom 5:12). It is called transgression (5:14). It is called disobedience (Romans 5:19). It is called offence (5:15,17,18,20). It signifies a fall and that is what Romans 5:12-14 describes.

Romans 5:12-14 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all*

have sinned: **13** (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **14** Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.

At this point, I wish to quote from the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith, 1742, Chapter VI*. I quote from this document so we might understand what our forefathers believed about this matter. Scripture references are completely written out in each instance where one was given as a proof text. There are five (5) paragraphs quoted from the confession and are quoted in bold print with the paragraph numbers at the head. The entire paragraph should be read with the Scripture references in the order presented.

"1. Although God created man upright, and perfect, and gave him a righteous law, which had been unto life had he kept it, and threatened death upon the breach thereof:

Genesis 2:16-17 *And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: {17} But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

Yet he did not long abide in this honor; Satan using the subtlety of the serpent to seduce Eve:

Genesis 3:12-13 *And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest <to be> with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. {13} And the LORD God said unto the woman, What <is> this*

<that> thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

1 Timothy 2:14 *"And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression."*

2 Corinthians 11:3 *"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."*

Then by her seducing Adam, who, without any compulsion, did wilfully transgress the law of their creation, and the command given unto them, in eating the forbidden fruit; which God was pleased according to his wise and holy counsel to permit, having purposed to order it, to his own glory.

2. Our first parents by this sin, fell from their original righteousness and communion with God:

Romans 3:23 *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"*

And we in them, whereby death came upon all; all becoming dead in sin.

Romans 5:12 *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"*

Which death does not result from the imitation of Adams sin - for infants dying in their infancy with no sin on them like unto Adam. Death passes upon all men, all nations of the world, and all individuals in it, through the sin of one man, Adam; even on such who never heard of the law which

forbid the eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, etc. All creatures are brought into bondage and death by it (Romans 8:20-22. Indeed, the whole creation groans together in pain until now).

Sin, in general, never comes by imitation; but it is from a corrupt nature. Did Cain sin by imitation when he murdered his brother? Did Lot's daughters sin by imitation when they contrived to commit incest with their father, and did?

So Adam's sin left us wholly defiled, in all the faculties, and parts of the soul and body

Titus 1:15 Unto the pure all things <are> pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving <is> nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.

Genesis 6:5 *And God saw that the wickedness of man <was> great in the earth, and <that> every imagination of the thoughts of his heart <was> only evil continually.*

Jeremiah 17:9 *The heart <is> deceitful above all <things>, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*

Romans 3:10-19 *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: {11} There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. {12} They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. {13} Their throat <is> an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps <is> under their lips: {14} Whose mouth <is> full of cursing and bitterness: {15} Their feet <are> swift to shed blood: {16}*

Destruction and misery <are> in their ways: {17} And the way of peace have they not known: {18} There is no fear of God before their eyes. {19} Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

3. They being the root

Romans 5:12 *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:*

Romans 5:19 *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

1 Corinthians 15:21-22 *For since by man <came> death, by man <came> also the resurrection of the dead. {22} For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

1 Corinthians 15:45 *And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam <was made> a quickening spirit.*

1 Corinthians 15:49 *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.*

What Adam did is put to us by imputation (counting, reckoning) and, by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead of all mankind; the guilt of sin was imputed, and corrupted nature

conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation, being now conceived in sin;

Psalms 51:5 *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*

Job 14:4 *Who can bring a clean <thing> out of an unclean? not one.*

and by nature children of wrath

Ephesians 2:1-3 *And you <hath he quickened>, who were dead in trespasses and sins: {2} Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: {3} Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.*

the servants of sin, the subjects of death

Romans 6:12 *Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.*

Romans 6:20 *For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.*

and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus set them free.

Hebrews 2:14 *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took*

part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;"

1 Thessalonians 1:10 "And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, <even> Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."

4. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed

Romans 8:7 "Because the carnal mind <is> enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

Ephesians 2:1 "And you <hath he quickened>, who were [dead in trespasses] and sins:"

Romans 6:13 "Neither yield ye your members <as> instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the [dead], and your members <as> instruments of righteousness unto God."

Romans 7:6 "But now we are delivered from the law, that being [dead] wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not <in> the oldness of the letter."

Colossians 1:21-22 "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in <your> mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled {22} In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: "

disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions

James 1:14-15 *"But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. {15} Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death."*

Matthew 15:19 *"For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:"*

[Editor's note: This is the area where there is much disagreement. Many say that a man is able to repent and believe, while the Scriptures teach that a person is unwilling and unable. He is said to be dead in trespasses and in sins. In other words, he is a corpse. A dead corpse can do nothing. You will recall the scriptures teach that the natural man *"receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."* -- 1 Corinthians 2:14 Notice the word "can." This denotes ability, not will. lk]

5. This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but <how> to perform that which is good I find not. -- Romans 7:18.

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. -- Romans 7:23.

For <there is> not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not. -- Ecclesiastes 7:20.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. -- 1 John 1:8.

and although it be through Christ pardoned, and mortified, yet both itself, and the first motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? {25} I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. -- Romans 7:24-25.

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. -- Galatians 5:17.

Thus ends the quotation from the *Philadelphia Confession of Faith*. I believe these things are true, not because the churches of that era believed them, but because the Scriptures teach them to be true. Thus, the testimony of Scripture is that every man is totally and inherently depraved. He **cannot** and **will not** come to God on his own!

"A wise man...built his house upon a rock."







