

Doctrines of Grace - Part 3

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[0 : 00] All right, team. Well, shall we? It looks... Well, in our last time together,! Eternal election unfolds in history by seeking out and saving those elect beloved.

As Good Arrow Smith observed, election having once pitched upon a man in whatever dunghill God's elector hid, election will find them out and bring them home.

This morning, it is ours to consider our condition in which electing grace finds us. And as Arrow Smith's descriptive dunghill alerts us, what we will discover about our condition is neither flattering nor fortuitous.

As unflattering as our condition is, it is something that we must soberly assess. For a right diagnosis of the ailment is critical for an appreciation of the required cure.

We will not grasp the glories of our salvation if we have not plumbed the depths of our plight. If grace is to move us from the misery and wreckage of our fallen condition to the majesty and wonder of fellowship with God, we must take sober stock of the severity of our state.

[1 : 56] The sinfulness from which grace rescues us is the dark backdrop of the gleaming splendors of grace, like the black velvet upon which the sparkling gem is placed.

It affords a perfect display and illuminating measure of the surpassing marvels of grace. And so some measure of the depths of our devastation is rightly comprehended in a consideration of grace and the doctrines of grace.

To this end, we'll offer both a portrait and a story. For our journey this morning will take us to the pathology lab.

What is this malady we have contracted? What is its nature? And it will take us to the forensics lab. How did we contract this deadly disease? What was its origin? So we first turn to the portrait. Our fatal pathology, a scriptural portrait.

[3 : 05] One important caveat, our portrait of humanity aims to concentrate, not be complete. And the scriptures say many things about the grandeur of humanity.

Uniquely fashioned in the image of God, endowed with many sparkling communicable divine attributes, the psalmist exalts in marvel that humanity was made but a little lower than the angels and crowned with glory and honor.

Psalms 8.5. So be aware that while our portrait takes up the darker hues, these are not the only colors suited to a complete picture, simply those most pertinent to our study, which asks, in what condition and with what natural prospects does the rescuing grace of God encounter us?

What, on this question, is the testimony of Scripture? Ah, from the very doorstep of humanity, in the initial generation of the offspring of our first progenitors, fratricide opens the lurid drama, Genesis 4. The first recorded boast is that of deadly revenge against a boy, again, Genesis 4. And swift is the descent of the generations, plunging to the moral nadir, eliciting the damning epitome, quote, The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, Genesis 6.5.

[4 : 53] Quite a lot of superlatives in that moral resume. Notice the intensity and extent. Not merely wickedness, but great wickedness, it says.

Well, surely only in isolated cases. No, great wickedness was in all the earth. Oh, but surely such great wickedness was only episodic or intermittent.

No, it says it was continual. Oh, but surely there were some moments of goodness, at least in intention. No, every intention was only evil.

So, the deepest, most inward recesses, in the deepest and most inward recesses of the heart, there was no good to be found, even in the tiniest germ, even a grain of mustard seed sized good.

No, every intention, quote, every intention of the thoughts of the heart was only evil continually.

[6 : 06] Like those philosophers' turtles, it was evil all the way down. A near all humanity consuming deluge, weeded out the worst of the wickedness, but not the root of the wickedness.

For the poison shoot instantly sprang up in the single extended family spared. We step backward with covering veil upon the recrudescence of the shameless shameful.

To catalog the horrors of human hypostasy from God's holiness expressed in his laws is too dismal a tale to tell of wickedness and its attendant woe.

The totality of the turpitude. Let us instead record and reflect upon some of Scripture's assessments. Says the preacher, The hearts of men are full of evil and madness is in their hearts while they live.

Ecclesiastes 9.3 The prophet Jeremiah echoes this verdict. The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately corrupt. Who can fathom it?

[7 : 25] Such melancholy judgment scattered across the sacred page are as numerous as pebbles on a beach.

But rather than catalog them, perhaps more fruitful to our errand is to pick up one or two and examine them more closely. Take Psalm 36.

It opens, Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart. There is no fear of God before his eyes.

For he flatters himself in his own eyes that his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. Now this is not a description of the superlatively wicked, the particularly flagitious outliers, This is simply mankind apart from the grace of God.

Quote, Transgression speaks to the wicked deep in his heart. It is as if transgression itself, violation of God's law, whether written in his conscience or on tablets, are the very oracle or guiding voice in the depths of his heart.

[8 : 47] Terrifying. If the fundamental orientation for humanity is to be fear of God, to recognize and respond to his great worth, that is not even on the sinner's screen.

There is no fear of God before his eyes. What then is before his eyes? Man flatters himself and his self-flattery.

Quote, For he flatters himself in his own eyes. And what does he flatter himself with? His wickedness.

Quote, That his iniquity cannot be found out and hated. That is, Man flatters himself That his sin is not detectable.

I will not be held accountable for this. And that his sin is not detestable. My transgression is really not so bad.

[9 : 49] This self-flattery is really, of course, delusional. And this theme reverberates through the scriptures that our sin makes us delusional.

The apostle forcefully expounds the theme in Romans. When we fail to acknowledge God and honor him, that is, ascribe to him supreme worth, that is, worship, we yield his rightful place in our worship to created things.

And as the apostle explains, we quote, Exchange the truth of God for a lie. 125. Literally, in the Greek, the lie.

The lie. The lie of our misplaced worship has a spreading, distorting effect. We are caught in the grip of a delusional field.

Self-deception becomes our whole ecosystem. Delusion. The great habitat for humanity. And not only does, sin make us delusional.

[11 : 04] It makes us manic addicts. Let's take up another pebble from the beach. The graphic image of the calamity of our corruption given by Jeremiah.

Jeremiah. He likens our running after our idols to a camel or wild donkey in heat. In heat. Quote, Who can restrain her lust?

2. 2. 2. 2. 2. 3.

Hopeless, for I have loved foreigners, and after them I will go. Verse 25. In poetic irony, we imagine our idols serve us, but in our insatiable lust, we serve them.

Our cravings are inexorable. They have us in their grip. We are enslaved. The case is, quote, hopeless.

[12 : 27] It is a fatal attraction. The apostle echoes this chilling dynamic. When we fail to rightly direct our worship to God and turn instead to created things, we are soon given over to them.

Romans 2, pass him. Our desire for them becomes inordinate and uncontrollable. They ensorcel and beguile our hearts, and we're swept away.

They have us. We are enslaved. We are under their dominion, their tyranny. Romans 6. As Jesus expresses it, he who sins is a slave to sin.

John 8.34. Yes, what is Jesus' testimony in this matter of the heart of man? For, as John 2.25 tells us, he himself knew what was in man.

Here is his sober assessment. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness.

[13 : 46] All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person. Mark 7.21-23. And Jesus' whole ministry was based upon this knowledge that people were captive to their sin, and that they needed to be set free from sin's tyranny over them.

The apostle sums up the matter thus. None is righteous. No, not one. No one understands. No one seeks after God.

All have turned aside. Together, they have become worthless. No one does good. Not even one. Their throat is an open grave. They use their tongues to deceive.

The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. In their paths are ruin and misery.

And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes. Romans 3.9-18. Well, we certainly have enough material here to shape some theological reflection.

[14 : 57] What are the conclusions from the pathology lab? Well, one thing to note with alarm is the pervasiveness of sin's contaminating taint.

Sin's sway is utterly comprehensive, reaching every aspect of our being with its corrupting contagion.

Not one faculty is left unaffected by its blasting, withering mildew. Let's take swift inventory of our fallen faculties.

Consider the sin-stricken deployment of our minds. How we perversely use our intellect to doubt, distort, deny, and defy God and His Word.

How our cunning serves to weave alibis and evasions. Contributes the awful artifice of re-narration, calling good evil and evil good.

[16 : 15] Where the light of God's illumination graciously shines into the windows of our understanding. We pull the shades and scurry for cover, lest our lies and crimes be exposed.

Consider our sin-wounded will. How we steal it against intrusion of God into our lives. Our will bars the doors against God's summons.

We are like the auditors of Stephen, the first martyr, who, quote, stopped their ears and rushed together against him and stoned him. Acts 7, 57. The damning description of the sacred page is stiff-necked.

An adamant determination not to budge with respect to God. Consider our sin-altering affections. How devastatingly disordered they are. Our hearts are the arena of a panoply of disordering replacements.

[17 : 32] A chaotic jumble of perverse preferences and distorted desires. A violent vandalism has befallen the shalom that should harmoniously reign within.

And it is not just a distortion, but an inversion. We hate what we should love and love what we should hate.

The flesh will ever flock to its fatal fancies. The pearl of great price will be trampled underfoot as we run to the mires that we would wallow in.

We have an unalterable taste for sin. Consider our sin-infected imaginations.

Our flesh-animated imaginations furnish us with a dress rehearsal for our sins. Here, our unborn iniquities spawn like orcs out of the slime.

[18 : 39] Germs of sin that yet lie slumbering in the soiled soul. In our imaginations, swelling with pride like Lucifer, we would ascend to the place of the Most High, usurping His throne and offices.

In twisted mockery of Christ's prophetic office, we spread lies instead of embracing His true revelation. In unholy parody of His priesthood, we ceaselessly forge idols, defiling the altars of our hearts.

In pathetic parody of His kingly office, we proclaim our puny selves as sovereign over against the Almighty God.

Consider, finally, our sin-corrupted conscience. How out of tune with God's holiness and will it has become. It's no longer reliable.

It is a trumpet that gives an uncertain sound. Conscience is not dead, but distorted. Its power is impaired.

[20 : 03] It does not prevail as it should over man's soul. Its voice is faint and fading. Its eye unclear and ever-clouding.

Thus, luridly and lamentably, is the comprehensive corruption suffered by sin. I've sought to avoid theological jargon, but suffer me one, I hope, helpful clarification.

The term total depravity is an infelicitous moniker for this reality, but this is what the term aims to affirm.

Sin's damage of us is total in the sense that no part of us has been shielded off from its taint and corruption.

Like a drop of poison, it pervades the entire cup of water. Mind, will, affections, imagination, conscience, instincts, intuitions, every aspect of our being.

[21 : 18] This melancholy conclusion brings us to the theological consequences of this reality for our prospects of salvation.

Three, in particular, are worth emphasizing. The first is rather obvious, but worth stating. The sheer folly of the hope of salvation by our own righteousness.

The lawyer who questioned Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life? Jesus lets him answer as to Scripture's testimony.

Oh, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. You have answered correctly, says Jesus.

Do this and live. Luke 10, 25 through 28. I've often wondered if Jesus ever encountered him again. I fancy Jesus might have asked him, Oh, remember me?

[22 : 26] Remember that conversation? How's that perfect obedience from the heart on the two great commandments going for you? You know, with this, the standard for salvation, sobriety dictates human hopelessness.

Any locomotive to heaven isn't running on human steam. No. I mean, can't you hear the apostles' voice echoing from Romans 3?

No one. No one. No, not one. And not only will we never deserve salvation through our obedience, we will never even desire it.

And this is the second theological consequence of our sin pathology. We will never, by our own initiative, cooperate with God's saving work.

We will oppose it. Our inveterate rebellion arrays us in battle formation against God as enemy, sworn enemy.

[23 : 44] Far from seeking to restore lost communion with God, our maker, we seek to kill him if only we could get our hands on him, which is precisely what we did when he came down from heaven for us and our salvation.

As the apostle insists, to be in the flesh, that is, our sinful humanity, is to be, quote, hostile to God, Romans 8, 7.

Quote, for the desires of the flesh are against the spirit of God and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh for these are opposed to each other.

Galatians 5, 17. Jesus channels this hostile spirit against God into the voice of the vineyard tenants in his parable representing all of us.

This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and then the inheritance will be ours. Mark 12, 7.

[24 : 53] Okay, yes, you acknowledge there is hostility, but surely humanity can repent or at least some can repent and simply believe the gospel.

We can get out of things like that. Well, yes and no. Let's formulate our answer as our third theological consequence of our sinful pathology.

We can come to Christ exercising repentance and faith in the sense that we are capable of it and indeed the gospel invites and commands us to do so.

But we just can't bring ourselves to do it. As the apostle told the Athenians, God commands all people everywhere to repent.

Acts 17, 30. To come to Christ in repentance and faith is not only an invitation but an obligation. And yet, Jesus tells us, no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. [26 : 13] John 6, 44. It is an utter impossibility for anyone to come to Christ apart from God's drawing.

Now, to clarify this inability, it does not consist in any physical defect. When we speak of our will being bound, it is not that our freedom of choice is taken away from us. The sinner is exercising their free choices again and again and again. It is just that their choices are invariably and monotonously for the, to them, delectable doings of darkness.

forgiveness. It is a moral bondage of their own unrelieved preference. It's not that their will cannot turn to Christ as if their will were somehow like a soldered wind vane.

[27 : 23] Can't turn at all. There is no malfunction in the mechanism. No, it freely turns whichever way the wind blows. But in the case of the unregenerate, that wind from the heart always and unrelievedly blows in the same monotonous and unrelieved direction toward the delights of the flesh and away from the delights of the spirit.

This is the plight of the sinner. They will always prefer their sin to the Savior. The sinner will never repent on their own.

And so also with belief. There is no deficiency in the faculty of the mind. It can entertain the thought of Christ as Savior.

But that thought has no appeal. It is threatening. It convicts them as a sinner in need of a Savior as possessed of a deadly malady and in need of the great physician.

It challenges their self-perceived sovereignty over their own life. Christ would strip them of their scepter to which they so fondly cling.

[28 : 54] As the birth of the true king threatened King Herod's pretensions, sins, so the sinner will reject any rival to their throne.

And notice again, this is a moral bondage, not really intellectual. Our stakes and prejudices jaundice our judgment.

Imagine with me, if a judge was to rule in a case in which she owned the majority stock, in the arraigned company, she would be required to recuse herself as her stakes and interests would sabotage any just judgment in the case.

This is intuitive to us all. But this is the case of every son of Adam and daughter of Eve in their natural state. The issue is one of nature, fallen versus regenerate.

The nature of a sheep has an invariable preference to feed on herbage. It desires not to consume carrion like the lion.

[30 : 09] To do so would require a change in its nature. As Jeremiah vividly puts the matter, can the leopard change his spots? Then also can you do good who are accustomed to doing evil?

Jeremiah 13 23. If there is hope for salvation, nothing less than a new nature is required. Once we understand the severity of our fallen condition and recognize that it was with us from birth, David confesses we were brought forth in iniquity and conceived in sin.

Psalms 51.5 Grasping that, we naturally ask, if sin's been with us from birth, where did it come from? Here we move from pathology lab to that of forensics. How did we contract this malady?

so too, a forensic plot line, the biblical story. Well, might we say with Thomas Adams, iniquity can plead antiquity.

[31 : 38] The story begins with Adam and the birth of that ruinous rebellion against God, which has come to characterize so universally the human race.

There is a worm at the root of the whole human family tree that spoils every piece of fruit that it bears, every leaf extended from its branch.

What was this all spoiling ruinous root? Through what portal did it make its entrance? the apostle answers Romans 5 12 quote sin came into the world through one man and death through sin so that death spread to all humankind.

But how we might naturally ask could the sin of one man be so faithfully consequential for all humanity. This was due to Adam's pivotal role as covenant head.

God did not enter into covenant with Adam simply as a private individual with only his own interests at stake but rather as the representative of all humanity.

[33 : 13] Adam created in the image of God was made in an original state of righteousness from which he might advance to a state of confirmed righteousness by means of a perfect obedience to the stipulations of the covenant of works do this and live highlighted in the prohibition concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil by this means Adam and all his posterity could advance into the state of blessedness and reward in perfect union and communion with God but as with his prospective success so also would his failure be imputed to his posterity did you get that

George Swinnick wonderful Puritan takes up the metaphor of a voyage of our race piloted by Adam always helpful to unpack these truths with metaphor Swinnick writes God formed man to be his viceroy and equipped him with all the abilities needed for such a voyage this is Adam he's speaking of Adam God formed Adam to be his viceroy and equipped him with all the abilities needed for such a voyage as the grounds for the covenant of works Adam set forth fully furnished with skill and richly laden with all the fortunes hopes and happiness of mankind Satan raised a storm before Adam had scarce launched out of sight the vessel through the unfaithfulness of Adam the pilot ran upon a rock and miscarried what what a depressing sight to Adam to behold himself and all his posterity sinking into the bottomless ocean of destruction and misery through his unfaithfulness and treachery God to be the first of should our fates pivot on Adam's piloting was Adam just constitutionally clumsy a pilot of the ship of humanity did we simply get a raw deal in terms of our representative no doubt God chose the best of the best to be the federal head of our race and would any of us have the hubris to imagine that we would have done a better job in Adam's place and we must remember that Adam was singular not simply in his role as covenant head but also in his capacities for they were pristine and unfallen there was nothing in Adam's God given nature that made his fall inevitable no inherent design flaw no hairline fracture let alone any fatalistic divine determination in his nature that would make his fall physically necessary or unpreventable and thereby somehow excusable Adam's sin was at once entirely possible yet at the same time an utterly inexplicable inversion of the orientation in which he was set much conjecture has gone into explaining how it could be that Adam would have sinned Aquinas thinks the fountain head was pride which led to a covetousness for God likeness that was expressly forbidden Luther thought the cause was unbelief even to entertain the serpent's temptation required illegitimate equivocation!

[38 : 08] over the truthfulness of God and his word in any event Adams was a self determined rebellion against his creator and lawgiver and a displacement of the covenant intimacy a commitment to an untruth a dissonance that distorted his natural orientation of dependence on God as creator and so inexplicably a perfidy was perpetrated in paradise by our covenant head and all humanity was with him plunged into judgment his condemnation was imputed to us his kin and the corruption that ensued in his nature was transmitted to us his posterity this we must think to be calamitous news indeed that

Adam's condemnation and corruption is ours by solidarity with him but this divine principle of solidarity and imputation not only made for extended condemnation and corruption by the unfathomable glorious purpose of God it also makes for acquittal and redemption for a number that no one can count for there is for there is a second Adam Christ the righteous who also stands as representative of his people for whom he acts and whose victory like

Adam's failure is imputed to his own the dismal extended impact by solidarity of Adam's headship to all his own makes for the glorious extended impact by solidarity of Christ's headship to all his own as the apostle brings out the parallel for as by a man came death by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead for as an Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive 1st Corinthians 15 21 and 22 the covenant framework of God's dealing with humanity which makes for the bad news of the first

Adam also makes for the good news the gospel of the last Adam but the apostle forbids us to see this parallel as one of symmetry the grace of the second Adam is out of all proportion to the curse of the first Adam Paul in the process of comparing the two pointing out their similarities he cannot but fall into contrasting them quote but the free gift is not like the trespass for if many died through one man's trespass much more has have the grace of God and the free gift by that grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for the many and the free gift is not like the result of one man's sin for the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification justification for if because of one man's trespass death reigned through that one man much more for those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of

righteousness they themselves reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ Romans 5 15 through 17 much more indeed amen and amen with this account of the turpitude of the condition which God's electing love finds us we take up Lord willing in our next study how the grace of God meets and masters this woeful state with an all overcoming rescue so hopefully see you next week we have time friends I've tried to leave a good bit for this challenging subject in case anyone has a comment a praise or a question or a query or a cavil whatever yeah yeah Tyler praise do do do do do

[44 : 26] Yes, yes, and we're going to get into that particularly next week, yes, where he calls to all everywhere.

Look unto me, all the ends of the earth, and be saved. The call goes out to all. Whoever is weary, let him come. Whoever is thirsty, let him come.

Oh, well, I have no money. No, come without money and buy. So, yes, there is a universal call that goes out. And we will hear next week, Lord willing, we'll take that up in more careful expositional detail, how God's grace and electing love affects this great rescue.

Sure, Richard. It seems to me that once you understand the hopelessness, the desperateness of our condition, of our sinful state, that depends on the prior answer to the question, how did we come to be in this state?

And the answer to that question, as you've rightly told us, is through the sin of Adam. Anyway. But that's precisely the story that's dissipated, evaporated, when we accept the naturalistic explanation that Charles Darwin gave us.

[46 : 07] The two are simply not compatible. All theistic evolution aside. Okay.

That's a comment. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, thank you. Yes. Yes. Yeah. So one of the things I thought about recently is how in our culture there's, well, not really recently, but before, there was an understanding that on the one hand, man was depraved because of the original sin.

But on the other hand, man is created in the image of God, and he still, in a sense, retains many wonderful abilities and distinction among creation.

And I don't know, I wonder, I guess in the political realm, right, how this country was founded on the idea that man has this capacity, because of the image of his creator with which he's endowed, to like flourish on the one hand.

But on the other hand, because he is so, you know, spiritually dead and he's prone to wander, we can't have that kind of like, like optimism about what we can do, even though we do have the image of God.

[47 : 35] So I'm wondering, like, how to properly negotiate in human affairs between what to be optimistic about and what to be pessimistic about. Yeah.

Does that make sense? Sure it does. Sure it does. Oh, that's a really easy question. No. Yes, you're absolutely right, and I tried to gesture toward it, that this is not the whole story, because you rightly bring up that man is a noble wreckage.

He has a crown, though it is tarnished. And in the image of God, there are these wonderful communicable attributes that God has given to us, and they hold wonderful prospects.

But they have been diminished. But we also want to affirm that sin has made a wreckage of these things. Now, our sinfulness does not eliminate the image of God.

There are some theologians who might suggest that, and we need to be careful about how they use the word differently. But I think that we would rightly say that the image of God cannot be erased.

[48 : 51] It can only be defaced, and it has been defaced, but not effaced, not erased. It is still present. So there is always going to be an amalgam.

So yes, a lot of discernment is to hold these two things together, and that's very important. How does it allow us to be optimistic or pessimistic?

I think as Christians, again, we ought always to try to keep these things together. So because man is in the image of God, it will never be right for us to have a complete condemnation or a complete dismissal, a complete pessimism.

There will always be something good to affirm of any and every human being in the image of God, and probably of the cultural artifacts of those human beings, because there will always be something of the image of God reflected in that.

But neither should we, so we ought not to demonize anyone or anything, but neither should we so valorize them, that we almost deify these things, as if it were only the image of God and not fallen. [50 : 11] So we ought not to have any sort of worshipful hope in any sort of Messiah figure or any sort of cultural artifact, because everything has fallen.

So Christians, knowing that, ought to be the most nuanced in our judgment, always combining both of those things. In terms of how positive we should be in the political realm and this, I think Christians would want to distinguish between optimism and pessimism and hope.

Hope, then, is grounded something outside of ourselves. Our hope is in God and his revealed good purposes that are redemptive. So we put our hope in him.

So we will not be able to create the kingdom of God through dint of our efforts, apart from the king returning himself to establish the kingdom.

So we will not have this vaulted optimism like some sort of enlightenment figures have.

[51 : 15] We will acknowledge that while we might be able to make some sort of progress, we will never be able to achieve the kingdom of God here. But maybe we can move the dial, because we do have a down payment of that future instantiation of the returning king in his spirit.

So we, as the church, should be a sneak preview, an anticipation of some of these things. So we ought to be a place of hopefulness, or a revelation, or at least a pointer to that solid hope that we have that will come.

So that tries to hold some of those things together. We're children of light, that even while it's still darkness, we get up and we live in light of that day that's dawning and live that way.

So, yeah. I think we probably better break now, because we have five minutes. But hopefully, see you next week. Thanks so much, team. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Nice to see you.

How was your trip? It was well. A lot of fun coming out. Good to see you. Good to see you. Thank you. Thank you.

[52 : 24] I appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.