

## DOCTRINE OF "INABILITY TO REACH GOD WITHOUT GRACE" IS IN THE GOSPELS

Total depravity means that there is no part of human nature that is able to reach God and love him without God helping. It does not mean you will do as much harm as you can but it does affirm that you are godless. This doctrine is taught by Protestantism but Catholicism also says that all we do is tainted with sin and God's grace alone helps us if we cooperate to do real good and do it in love for him.

### TOTAL DEPRAVITY IN THE GOSPELS

Jesus regarded all people as being totally depraved. We surely know you have to be totally depraved to suggest such a thing.

He taught that if your eye is evil then you will be full of the darkness of evil (Matthew 6:22). This implies that you can have no good in you at all. You can act good but you are still totally evil.

A man came up to Jesus calling him good teacher. Jesus said that nobody was good only God: "Why do you call me good for nobody is good but God?" (Mark 10:17,18). Christians say that the man thought Jesus was a good man and Jesus was telling him that he could only be good if he was God. If right their interpretation would mean that all are sinners and cannot stay out of it. And the same interpretation holds true if Jesus was just telling him that his idea of good was wrong and that only God knows what good is and lives that goodness.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to the people that the scribes and Pharisees only acted for show. For ordinary listeners, he would have been taken to mean that were complete fakes. That is why we should interpret him as saying just that.

The man called Jesus a good teacher. Yet Jesus rejected this. It was not flattery for Jesus was famous as a teacher. The man meant it. Jesus just didn't like being called good by anybody human for he thought that humans have an unclear idea of what good is and don't understand real goodness as represented by almighty God. He thought humans were too sinful to have a clue about what it meant to worship God as good.

There are other interpretations but they don't fit the Christian faith. For example, we could hold that Jesus rejected the compliment for he was a sinner like everybody else. Some say Jesus only meant that the man was flattering him and didn't mean it which was why he rejected the compliment. But there is no hint of that in the text. You don't say, "Why do you call me good for nobody is good but God?" to somebody that is flattering you. You say, "You flatter me." And besides the man asked him about how to inherit everlasting life and Jesus answered him thus acknowledging him as sincere not as a flatterer.

A slave is a person who is forced to work for nothing. Jesus said that anybody who sins is a slave to sin (John 8:34). Then he promised to free anybody who was a slave and who wanted to be free. This implies that you cannot free yourself from sin and that you need him to shatter the chains. In other words, he was testifying to total depravity.

Jesus said that it was easier for a camel to pass through the eye of needle than for a rich man to enter God's kingdom. He claimed that with man entry is impossible but not with God. So God must change the rich man's desires to save him. The rich man is too bad to want the happiness of Heaven enough to turn to God without God's help. That is extreme badness meaning that the man couldn't deserve anything else but everlasting punishing in Hell showing Jesus certainly taught an everlasting Hell. The rich man could see to it that he will have entry into the kingdom when he is dying for he is going to lose all he has anyway. Jesus says no – it's still impossible. The rich man must be totally depraved and only God can get him out of that state. The reason then people stay in Hell forever is because nobody can manage to live up to the moral law of God properly and it is because they cannot put things right that they need to suffer forever in Hell. Salvation is declared to be difficult and sincerity is obviously declared to be insufficient for eternal salvation for you could sincerely believe there is no sin in being rich. Also, the problem Christ has with being rich is that the rich person will prefer the riches to God and one can be poor and still prefer something that is not God to God so they are in the same mess as the rich.

Luke 16 has Jesus saying that whoever can be trusted in tiny things can be trusted in bigger and whoever cannot be trusted in tiny cannot be trusted in bigger. He said whoever is dishonest in tiny things will also be dishonest in bigger things. He said that if you cannot be trusted in earthly riches nobody will trust you with heavenly riches. He said that if you cannot be trusted with somebody else's property nobody will give you property of your own (verses 10-12). The Bible says we all fall in little things (James 3:2). Jesus made the law of Moses even tougher – wilful desires or temptations are declared to be

sinful which means that we are a lot of sinning every day. Jesus said our failures however small mean we cannot be trusted and if we cannot be trusted then we are totally depraved.

Christ told the Pharisees and scribes that they were literally nothing but hypocrites (Matthew 23:5), they wanted everybody to be eternally lost (Matthew 23:14,15), they were blind – don't see at all (Matthew 23:19) and they were full of greed and badness (Matthew 23:25-28). If they were full of wickedness then there was no good in them at all. Some would say a person is full of themselves without meaning that they are really full of arrogance and pride. But it is wrong to exaggerate like that and it is abusive. The Christian has to take Jesus literally. Jesus did not talk as if he meant some of the Jewish leaders. The ones he had for acquaintances like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus were not said to be good or to be exceptions. If the Jewish leaders were all bad despite all the spiritual training they got and all the unpleasant things ministers have to accept as part of their calling then the laypersons must have been worse not better.

There is no room for blaming Protestant Calvinism or the apostle Paul for the bleak doctrine of human nature. Jesus was in it too. Religion is one thing but it cannot override psychology which would see Jesus as seeing rottenness in himself and projecting it on to everybody else.

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