

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY

Video Lecture Series

by Robert D. McCurley, ThM

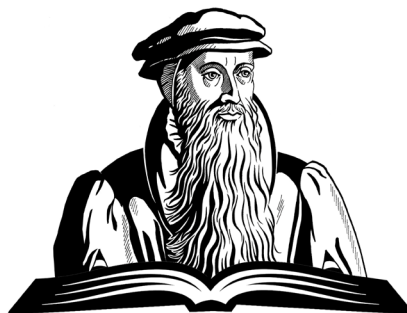
STUDY GUIDE

Module 3:

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Lecture 7:

THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY



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Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the Authorized King James Version.

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STUDY GUIDE

Module 3

The Nature of Sin

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Module 3:

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN

Lecture 7:

The Doctrine of Total Depravity

Introduction

The problem with sinful men is that they do not realize that the bad news regarding their spiritual condition is far worse than they think; and the good news of God's grace is far better than they think. These two things go together. We need to see ourselves as God sees us, and as he describes us in the Bible. Think of a white sheep. If you see it from a distance, and it's standing on the side of a hill with green pasture, you might look at it and think it is a very white sheep. But if snow falls onto that pasture, and now you're looking at the sheep against the backdrop of a blanket of snow, it might look rather dirty; it might not look rather brown or something else. That whiteness of the snow exposes the dirtiness of the sheep. The Scriptures teach us that sin affects and disables the whole of the natural man.

Theme: *The doctrine of Total Depravity.*

I. Scriptural Basis

"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." (Genesis 6:5)

1. The intensity of sin.
2. The totality of sin.
3. The inwardness of sin.
4. The exclusivity of sin.
5. Sin is habitual.
6. Sin is innate.

Questions:

1. What characteristics of sin are manifested in Genesis 6:5? Where do you see them in this text?

2. What are the implications of the words, “GOD saw the wickedness of man,” rather than that “man saw”?

3. How bad is this bad news to the unconverted sinner? What is the great need that this should point to for the sinner?

II. Doctrinal Overview

As summarized in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, chapter 9, paragraph 3:

“Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation: so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.”

1. Total depravity defined.
 - a. It influences man’s mind and understanding.
 - b. It influences what man loves.
 - c. It influences man’s conscience.
 - d. It influences what he does, how he uses his will, the things that he pursues, etc.
2. Total depravity results in total inability to do what is pleasing the Lord.

- a. The natural man is a slave to sin.
- b. The natural man is spiritually dead.
- c. The natural man is blind to the truth.
- d. The natural man is powerless; he has no strength.
- e. The natural man is ignorant of the truth.

3. Conclusion: total depravity and total inability is as universal as sin itself.

Questions:

1. How is the word “total” defined in this lecture, in terms of total depravity? What does it not mean? How does this help us in understanding total depravity?

2. Please show how the Bible makes clear that every part of the natural man, every faculty, is affected by sin? (tip: *understanding, affection, conscience, will*)

3. How does the total depravity of the natural man affect his ability to please the Lord?

4. In what ways is the natural man affected by total inability? How does the Bible describe it?

5. Describe the way that a natural man is powerless and ignorant because of total inability?

6. What are the concluding points about the doctrine of Total Depravity?

III. Polemical Exposition

Objection 1: *Not all men appear equally wicked.*

Objection 2: *What about the so-called good works of men? There must be some good in them.*

Objection 3: *If it is true that man has total inability, and is unable to do what is good, then he should not be held accountable for doing good either. If he is not able, then he cannot be responsible.*

Questions:

1. How are we to understand the sinfulness of sin, and the degrees of the heinousness of sin? How do these terms help you to answer Objection #1?

2. How are we to understand that we see some good works done by unconverted men? What does the term “civic good” refer to?

3. Does the natural man’s total inability dismiss his responsibility? Why?

IV. Practical Exposition

1. Ministers must preach both law and gospel.
 - a. The law exposes men to the reality of their sin—the bad news.
 - b. The bad news makes the good news of the gospel relevant.
2. The inescapable necessity of the sovereign grace of God, and the Holy Spirit’s ministry.
3. The way up is the way down.
4. The doctrine of Total Depravity, and total inability, requires that all the glory and honor goes to God, and not to man.
 - a. God is lifted up high in all his glory.
 - b. Man is put down into the dust.

Questions:

1. How does the doctrine of Total Depravity direct the preaching of the gospel? What two parts should always be included, and which one should be first?

2. How is the inescapable necessity of the sovereign grace of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit seen in Ephesians chapter 2?

3. In this lecture, we heard that “the way up is the way down,” with regard to the preaching of the gospel. What does this mean? and how might this truth be applied in the Christian’s daily life and heart?

4. How does the doctrine of Total Depravity, and total inability, require all glory and honor be given only to God? Is there ever a time when man should take credit, or point to himself? How does the Bible show us that God is lift up on high, and man is put down into the dust?

V. Self-Reflection

The gospel of Jesus Christ demands humility. After all, what does a true Christian have to boast about? We were all dead in sin and separated from God, in bondage to sin, ruled by Satan, and God’s wrath burned against us. If any of us now have spiritual life in Christ, it is entirely by the work of God’s grace, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit in us. Why then do we look down on others? Who makes us to differ? Let us prostrate ourselves before the Lord Jesus Christ, and give all glory to God, and let us learn the meekness of a dove while in this world.
