

Let's start by stating the obvious...

- ▣ 1) We can easily get carried away with predestination, free will, God's justice/fairness, God's sovereignty, and forget why we even cared to begin with.
- ▣ 2) "Calvinists" sometimes are judgmental, arrogant, ungracious, unforgiving, and dogmatic.

What is Calvinism?

- ▣ A theological system, or set of doctrines, derived from Scripture that speaks of human depravity and God's sovereignty as they relate to salvation. In short, they are doctrines of *grace*.
- ▣ Some like to define Calvinism by offering 5 points of doctrine (Total Depravity, Unconditional Election, Limited Atonement, Irresistible Grace, Perseverance of the Saints), abbreviated by the acrostic "TULIP"

“TULIP”

It's all about **God's grace.**

- ▣ Total Depravity: The Need for Grace
- ▣ Unconditional Election: The Basis of Grace
- ▣ Limited Atonement: The Extent of Grace
- ▣ Irresistible Grace: The Efficacy of Grace
- ▣ Perseverance of the Saints: The Strength of Grace

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

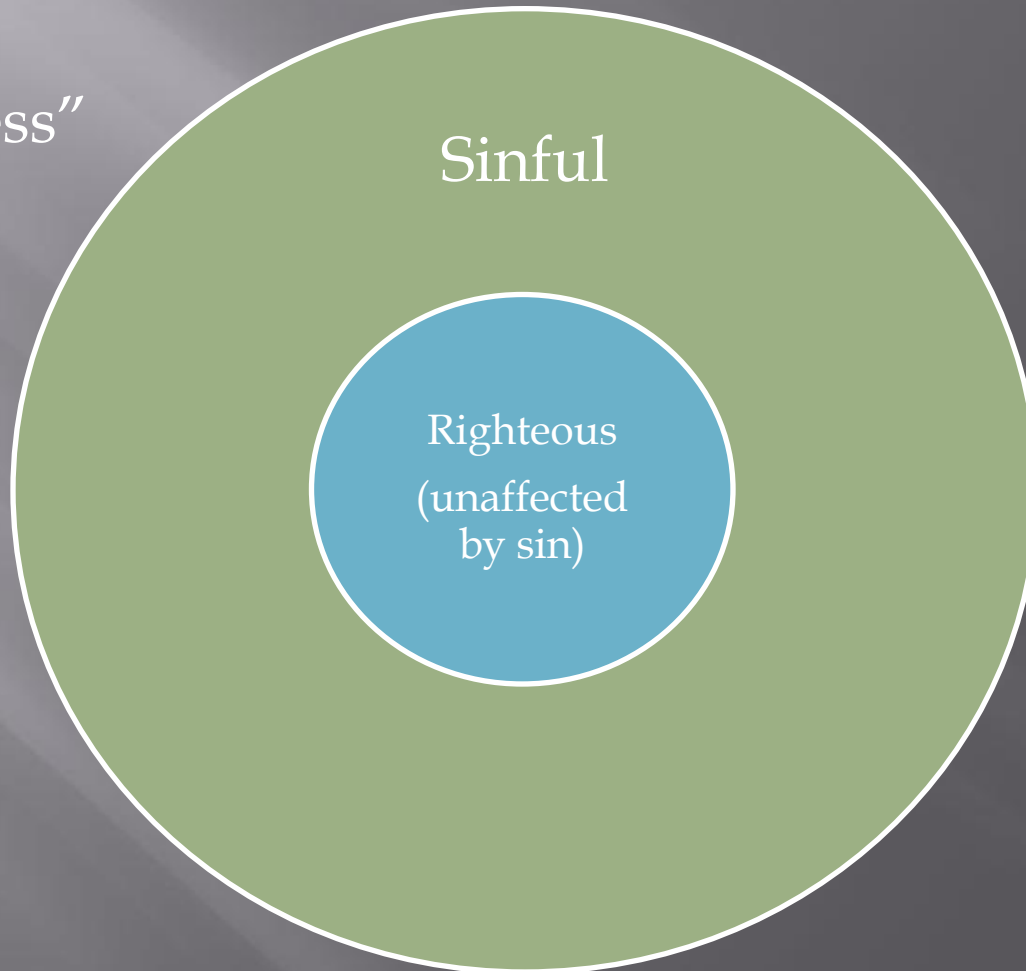
- ▣ Not to be confused with “utter” depravity. We aren’t necessarily as wicked as we can possibly be.
- ▣ The “total” in the term *total depravity* refers to the *effect* of sin and corruption on the *whole* person.
- ▣ Sin affects every aspect of our being: the body, the soul, the mind, the will, and so forth. The total or whole person is corrupted by sin.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ There's no "island of righteousness" that escapes the influence of the fall.
- ▣ "radical corruption" = corruption from the root, the core, the heart of our being. "Radical" derives from the Latin *radix*, which means "root."
- ▣ Contrast this with the prevailing idea that sin is only "on the surface" of our being - that we are good at our root and certainly perfectible.

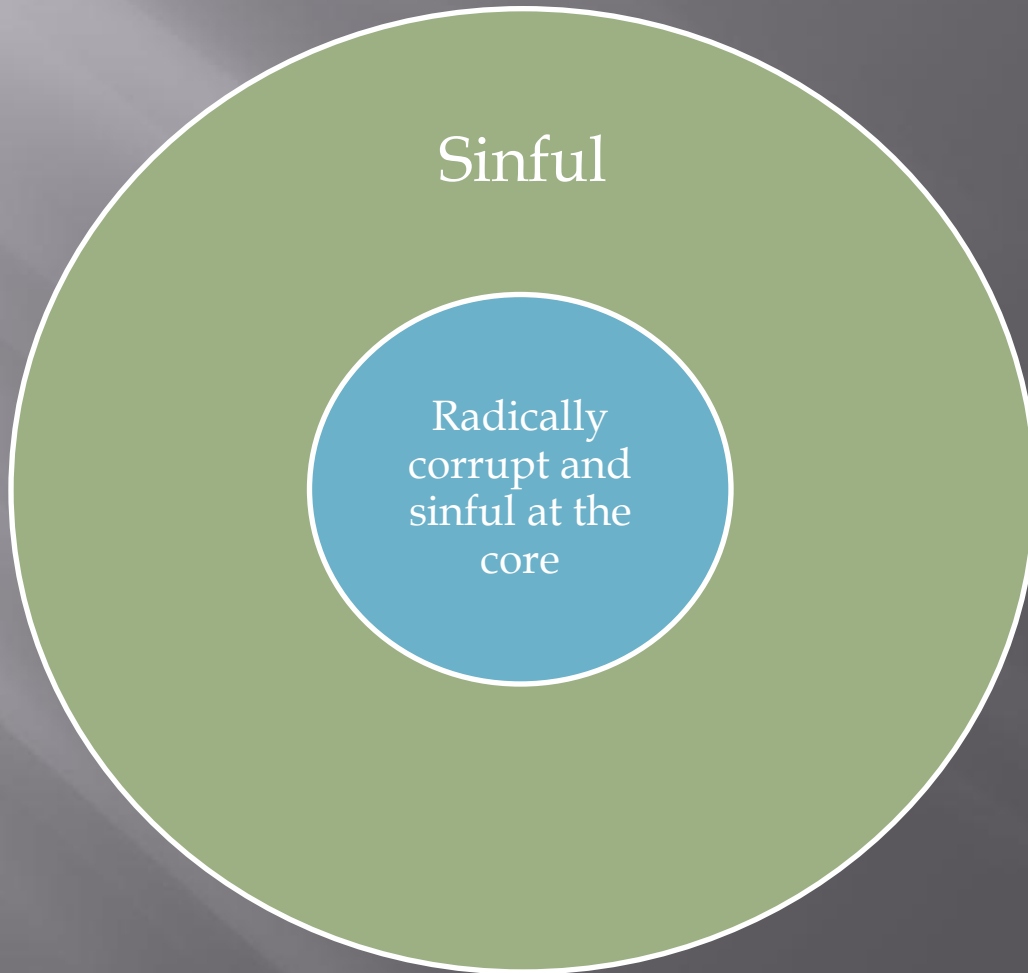
TOTAL DEPRAVITY

“Island of
Righteousness”



TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Total
Depravity



TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ Jesus frequently described this condition with images drawn from nature:
 - Just as a corrupt tree yields corrupt fruit, so sin flows out of a corrupt human nature.
- ▣ We are not sinners because we sin; We sin because we are sinners.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ The Reformers acknowledged that sinners in their fallen condition are still capable of performing works of “civil virtue.”
- ▣ That is, they are deeds that conform outwardly to the law of God.
- ▣ Fallen sinners can refrain from stealing and perform acts of charity, but these deeds are not deemed good in an ultimate sense. God looks past the outward and evaluates the motive behind them.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

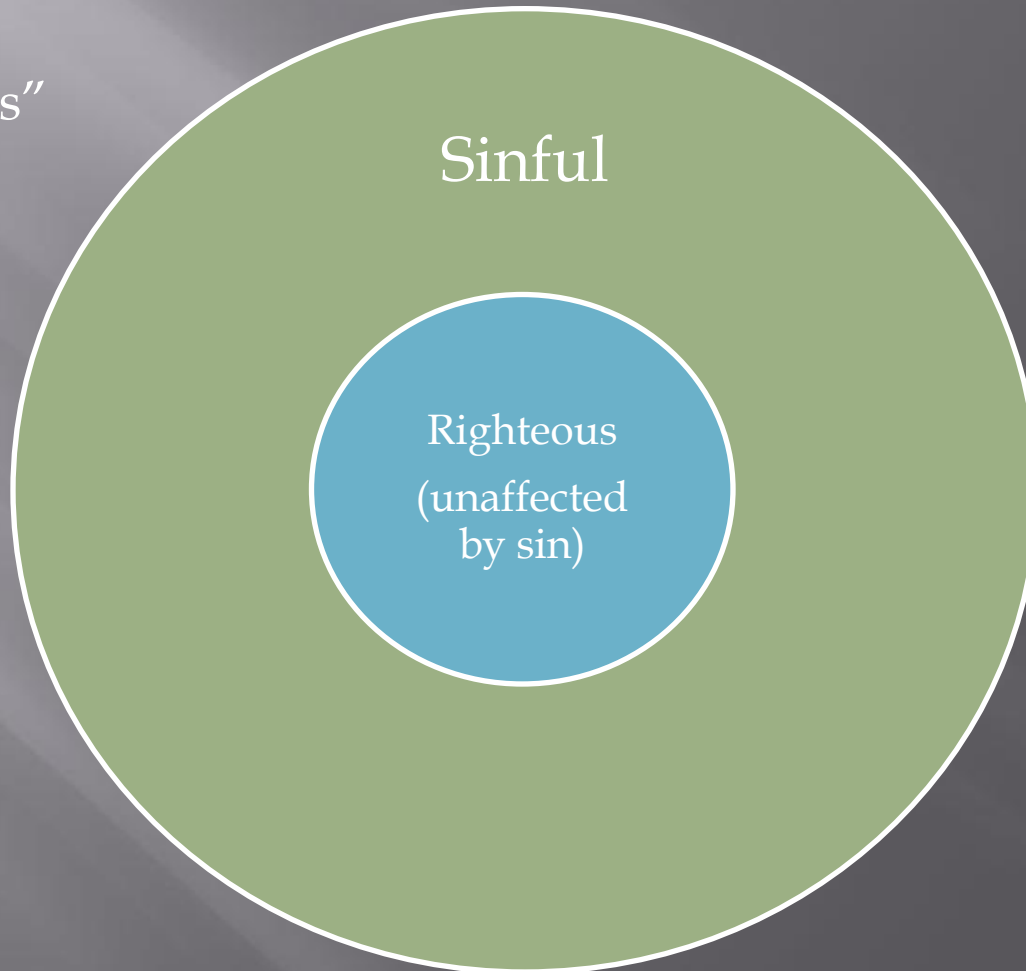
- ▣ The supreme motive required of everything we do is the love of God.
- ▣ A deed that outwardly conforms to God's law but proceeds from a heart alienated from God is not deemed by God a good deed.
- ▣ Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) said that civil virtue is motivated by "enlightened self-interest."
- ▣ Keep in mind, we're speaking of the fallen human in a pre-regenerated state.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ How did man enter this fallen state of radical corruption?
- ▣ Original Sin
 - Not referring to the first sin committed, but to the *result* of that first sin.
- ▣ As for the *degree* of corruption involved with original sin, not everyone is in agreement.

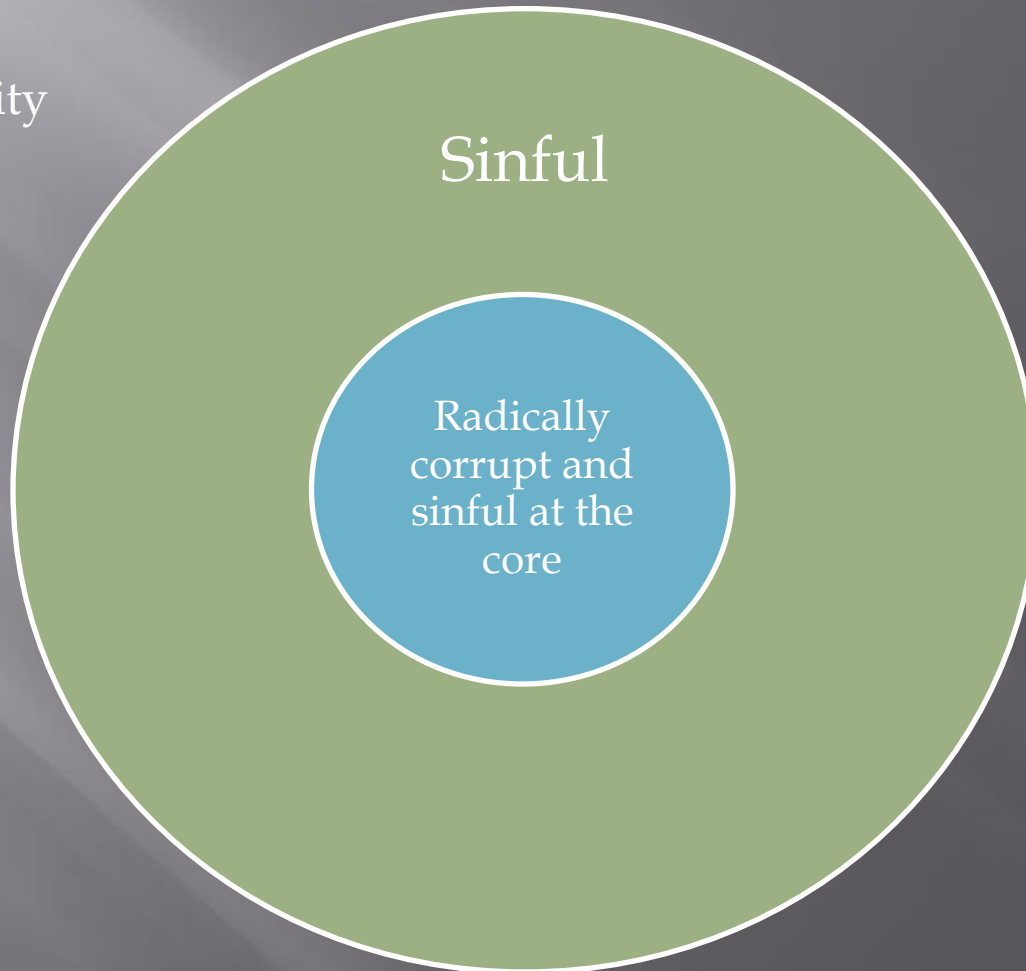
TOTAL DEPRAVITY

“Island of
Righteousness”



TOTAL DEPRAVITY

Total Depravity



TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ One of the most volatile controversies of the 4th century involved the doctrine of original sin.
- ▣ A monk named Pelagius took offense at St. Augustine's famous written prayer: "Grant what thou commandest, and command what thou dost desire."

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

What did Pelagius argue?

- ▣ Pelagius disagreed that it is in any way necessary for God to “grant” what he commands us.
- ▣ Pelagius assumed that *moral responsibility* always carries with it *moral ability*. It would be unjust of God to require his creatures to do what they are unable to do in their own power.
- ▣ If God requires moral perfection, then mankind must be able to achieve perfection. Though grace aids our quest for moral perfection, **grace is not necessary for us to reach it.**

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

What did St. Augustine argue?

- ▣ Augustine argued that grace *is* necessary.
- ▣ Before the fall, the requirement for moral perfection was already present. The fall did not change the requirement, but it did change *us*.
- ▣ What was once a moral *possibility* became, without grace, a moral *impossibility*.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

What else did Pelagius assert?

- ▣ Pelagius argued that human nature was created good and cannot be modified in its essence. Therefore, sin does not change our essential moral nature
 - we may sin, but we remain “basically good.”
- ▣ At the heart of Pelagius’s concern in his debate with Augustine was a desire to protect the idea of man’s free will.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ According to Pelagius, man's will remains entirely free and retains the capacity for indifference.
- ▣ In other words, man's will is not predisposed or inclined towards evil.
- ▣ All men are born free of any predisposition to sin. We are all born in the same moral condition as Adam enjoyed before the fall.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- 1) What is free will?
 - 2) Is free will really free?
 - 3) Was man's will affected by the fall or not?
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- 1) Ability to choose from what you *desire*.
 - 2) Only free insofar as choosing from what you desire. A man cannot choose what he does NOT desire.
 - 3) St. Augustine (and the Reformers centuries later) believed the Scriptures bear witness to the reality that the fall affected the whole person, including the will.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

So what's the point?

The point is this:

- 1) We cannot choose what we don't desire.
- 2) In our fallen state, we don't desire God.
- 3) We *cannot* choose God.

“natural inability” = an impediment that is extrinsic to the will; thus even if you will, you cannot carry it out

“moral inability” = the inability to carry out a course of action or decision because you do not *desire* to

Can a heart, alienated from God, corrupted from the fall, truly desire God and his righteousness apart from the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit?

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ After Pelagius was condemned by the church, a new “Semi-Pelagianism” position emerged.
- ▣ Semi-Pelagianism – Man *is* affected by the fall and grace *is* necessary. But the person has the ability to reject the grace or accept the grace *in his own strength*.
- ▣ Therefore, in the final analysis, the sinner in his own strength is the one who determines whether or not he will be redeemed or lost.

TOTAL DEPRAVITY

- ▣ The Augustinian view describes the “divine initiative” as key to a person’s salvation:
 - *Before* a person comes to Christ, God works monergistically, independently, sovereignly, by changing the soul of the sinner and breathing new life into the person *before* the person has the power to come to Christ. And they *do* come to Christ, and come to Him joyfully.
- ▣ Jesus went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one **can** come to me unless the Father has *enabled* him" (John 6:65).