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**“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psalm 58:3).**

## **Man’s Depraved Nature**

**Central Truth:** Fallen man is in dire need of Jesus.

**L298. Date:** November 1987. **Text:** Psalm 58:1-11.

**Topic:** Depravity: Of Man.

A basic doctrine of biblical Christianity is this: Every person in the human race is suffering under the depravity of sin. The explanations of that doctrine vary, but the Bible is very clear in teaching the fact.

What does *depravity* mean? It means that one is corrupted, perverted from his original design or intent, according to the dictionary. The Bible uses the term to mean that there is something wrong with the nature of man which inclines him away from God and toward sin.

*Depravity* does not mean that one is as bad as some are, or as bad as he can become. It does not mean that he is guilty of every sin or that he will commit every sin. It rather means that he is weakened toward sin so that he will corrupt himself before God by sinning. Even more, depravity means that man is unable to remedy his condition. Watch the doctrine develop as you read the lesson comments which follow.

Psalm 58 is a cry against judicial corruption in the psalmist's day. It is also an expression of depravity in the real life situations you and I face day by day.

We believe in the total inherent depravity of the whole human race.

### **I. THE ROOT OF DEPRAVITY**

*“Ye work wickedness; ye weigh the violence of your hands in the earth” (Psalm 58:2).* That is the expression of the depraved heart of the

sinner.

**A. The heart is depraved.** God himself said, *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?”* (Jeremiah 17:9). That is why a person will glory in wisdom, power, and riches (Jeremiah 10:23), rather than in the Lord. He lives under the influence of *“the carnal mind,”* which is *“enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:7). The very thoughts of depraved man are vain — empty, profitless (Psalm 94:11). The problem of man begins with what is in him. His heart is impure and depraved.

**B. The heart is the source of evil.** Man has *“an heart which deviseth wicked imaginations”* (Proverbs 6:18). Jesus said, *“From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness; all these evil things come from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-23). Such wicked things could come only from a wicked heart.

The Bible says the heart of man is stubborn (Ecclesiastes 8:11), mad (Ecclesiastes 9:3), depraved (Jeremiah 17:9), filled with evil (Matthew 23:25), the fountainhead of all evil (Mark 7:21-23), and the source of unbelief and covetousness (Hebrews 3:12; II Peter 2:14). The heart is wicked. Depravity is real. That is why God says to every person, *“You must be born again.”*

## II. THE EXTENT OF DEPRAVITY

Not only is every person suffering under a depraved heart, but the whole nature of every person is also depraved. Psalm 58:2 speaks of your *“heart”* and *“your hands.”* The *“heart”* refers to inner motives. The *“hands”* refer to deeds of the body. Both are depraved as they *“work wickedness”* and *“weigh . . . violence.”*

**A. All people are depraved.** *“God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”* (Genesis 6:12). That was not the condition of an ancient, less cultured time than our own. It is the condition now. It will be the condition in the last days when perilous times shall come (II Timothy 3:1). *“There is none righteous, no, not one”* (Romans 3:10).

**B. The whole of each person is depraved.** Sin has affected us in mind, emotion, will, and body. Think of that.

1. The mind is depraved. *“As they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind”* (Romans 1:28).

2. The emotions are depraved. Men “*hate the good, and love the evil*” (Micah 3:2). They love the world rather than God (I John 2:15) even though he who is a friend of the world is the enemy of God (James 4:4).

3. The will is depraved. It is in rebellion against God who said, “*I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD*” (Deuteronomy 1:43). A person's refusal to respond to the appeal of God is the sign of a rebellious will (John 5:40).

4. The body is depraved. That is why physical death comes to each of us (Romans 5: 12). It lives in “*the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*” which rejects God and follows the world (I John 2:16).

Depravity is expressed in different ways by different people, but it is a fact of life to all (Romans 1:18-32). The only remedy is Jesus Christ.

### **III. THE NATURE OF DEPRAVITY**

A thing is inherent when it exists in one as a natural and inseparable quality or characteristic. Depravity is inherent in that it is a natural part of our human nature. We experience depravity from birth. “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies*” (Psalm 58:3).

One sins because he is a sinner. The act results from the condition. A peach tree bears peaches. It is not fruit on the limbs which determines what kind of tree it is. The nature of the tree determines what kind of fruit it bears. The acts of sin are only indications of a depraved nature in the sinner.

God asks, “*Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil*” (Jeremiah 13:23). The psalmist David confessed, “*I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me*” (Psalm 51:5). We get a sin-weakened nature from our parents because that is the kind of nature they have. All people share the same human nature (Romans 3:10-19). The sin nature (which we call depravity) comes from birth.

God sees us as we really are. “*The LORD pondereth the hearts*” (Proverbs 21:2). (See also 1 Samuel 16:7.) When one pretends religious devotion but does not possess it, God knows (Matthew 15:8). Nothing is hidden from Him. He knows who we are and what we are like. Our only hope lies in repentance, confession, and forgiveness.

### **IV. THE EXPRESSION OF DEPRAVITY**

Psalm 58:4, 5, does not give a very flattering picture of the human race.

*“Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers.”* The description is enlarged in Romans 3:13-18. To read it is to weep at the destitution of the human race.

**A. The rejection of God's Word is an evidence of depravity.** Sinners *“have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house”* (Ezekiel 12:2). *“They refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear”* (Zechariah 7:11). Turning away from truth, people turn to fables of all sorts (II Timothy 4:4). God has gone to the limits of infinite grace in dealing with human beings, but many have rejected Him over and over again (Jeremiah 32:33). How much greater evidence of depravity could there be than to reject the personal appeal of God through His messengers (II Chronicles 24:19; 36:15, 16)? No further proof is needed.

**B. The rejection of God's will is an evidence of depravity.** People can harden their hearts against doing the will of God (Psalm 95:8). That results in a continual and increasing hardening of the heart (Hebrews 3:13). The Bible warns, *“He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy”* (Proverbs 29:1). This is both the evidence and the end of human depravity.

## V. THE JUDGMENT ON DEPRAVITY

Judgment is coming upon sinners. Psalm 58:6-9 describes it in quite vivid terms so we can know the certainty and severity of it.

**A. God will be the judge of sinners** (verse 6). *“He cometh to judge the earth: he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth”* (Psalm 96:13). There is a witness in our hearts which says, *“God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work”* (Ecclesiastes 3:17). Even the secrets of the heart will be brought to light and judged in that day (Romans 2:16). God himself will be the judge. *“He hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness”* (Acts 17:31).

**B. Sinners will suffer under the judgment of God.** Notice the terrible verbs of Psalm 58:6-9 which describe the fate of sinners under God's judgment: *“break, “ “melt away, “ “cut, “ “pass away, “ “not see, “ “take them away.”* If those are the figures used to picture the judgment, how terrible will the reality be! *“The transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off”* (Psalm 37:38). God will cast them away in punishment and eternal suffering (Psalm 73:18,19; Philippians 3:19;

Jude 13-15; Revelation 20:15). How tragic is the end for the depraved soul of man!

God's judgment has a twofold purpose: to punish the wicked and to vindicate the righteous. The day of judgment will be a time of sorrow for the wicked, but the righteous person shall rejoice when he sees justice done (Psalm 58:10). God will recompense the work of the righteous and give a full reward for their labor (Ruth 2:12). Then will be seen the wisdom of knowing and serving God in this world.

God will vindicate His own acts as well. *"He is a God that judgeth in the earth"* (Psalm 58:11). All He has done is according to the principles of righteousness, even when human beings could not understand it so (Psalm 48:10). *"The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works"* (Psalm 145:17). People will recognize that truth when the end of all things has come and God has vindicated His works before the whole universe.

Now look back over the Bible truths reviewed in this study. We have seen that man is in desperate trouble. He has a problem inherited from birth, as a part of his human nature, which will destroy him and from which he cannot deliver himself. His only hope is in God. What was said of ancient Israel can be said of the whole human race: *"Thou hast destroyed thyself; but in me is thine help"* (Hosea 13:9). God is willing and ready to deliver you. Flee to Him now.

## Questions

1. What does depravity mean?
2. What does total depravity mean?
3. What does inherent depravity mean?
4. How does the Bible prove that man is depraved?
5. What scripture proves that all men are depraved?
6. What scriptures show that the mind, emotion, and will are depraved?
7. What do you see in your society that indicates depravity?
8. How is divine judgment the consequence of depravity?
9. What hope does the righteous person have in the day of judgment?
10. What promise is made to sinners in Hosea 13:9?