

Humanists tell us the existence of evil in our world is the result of a lack of education, proper family upbringing, and the like. Contrary to these views, the Bible tells us the real problem is our depraved human nature.

It states that every human being, no matter how excellent his human ancestry, is born into this world with a perverted nature that is completely blind to the truth of God and set on pleasing self rather than our Creator.

However, in speaking of the total depravity of man the Word of God does not say a person is unable to distinguish or choose between right and wrong.

Neither does it teach that man is incapable of appreciating goodness or doing things that are morally attractive and beneficial to others. There is a humanistic goodness in most people that we cannot deny. But this falls short of the glory of God and is therefore unacceptable to Him.

What the depravity of man means is that the effects of the Fall have permeated every component of every member of the human race; the mind, conscience, emotions, desires, imaginations and, in particular, the will are all tainted to some degree or another by sin.

The result of this is that man has no ability or desire to conform to God's Holy standards and purposes, but instead has become slave to his own will and desires. The Apostle Paul gives his verdict:

To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

(Romans 8:5-9)

As stated above, even though an individual has his mind set on pleasing self, he still may prefer and do things that are high and noble and true; yet he may not prefer them because they are what God wills, but because they are things that attract him personally, or that gain him honour in the eyes of others.

In this case, he is just as depraved as the man who desires or does none of these things. Therefore, to quote the words of the famous preacher R.A. Torrey:

What every unregenerate man needs is a total turning around of his will, so that he no longer seeks to please self, but surrenders himself in all things to do the things that please God and to do them because they please God.

The New Testament makes it clear that such surrender in our fallen state is impossible without the New Birth and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. The theological term for the New Birth is regeneration. This is not simply a moral or religious reform, but the bringing of new life; the impartation of a new nature, the very nature of God Himself, to those who would repent and believe on Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

The picture of the unregenerate man given in the Holy Scriptures may seem severe and dark at first. But as we come to know men better, through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, and as we come to know ourselves better, and above all, as we come to know God better, and see ourselves in the light of His holiness, we find the Bible doctrine of the total depravity of man to be absolutely accurate.