

Total Depravity

Its importance:

Our understanding of the problem will govern our understanding of the treatment needed. If we fail to understand the Biblical teaching on this doctrine our understanding of all the doctrines related to salvation will be faulty. To have a right understanding in this matter is therefore crucial.

To what does the expression refer?

The expression "total depravity" describes the condition of man as he is now in sin, as a result of the "fall" in Adam. It does not indicate man's original state when first created.

What it does not mean:

It does not mean that every man is as evil as he possibly could be. It does not mean that man is incapable of things considered good and noble from a human viewpoint.

What it does mean:

Basically it means that sin has affected every aspect of a man's being. It means that in and of himself, man in the state of sin is unable to do anything which is spiritually good or which will contribute toward his return to and reconciliation with God. Broadly speaking we may view "man" as comprised of mind (intellect, that part of us which thinks and understands); affections (that part of us which "feels", either attracting us to something or repelling us from it); and will (the volitional part which chooses and acts).

How has sin affected these basic elements of man's being?

1. The mind has become darkened with respect to spiritual things: Romans 8:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:9-14 (especially vs. 14); 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 4:17,18; Colossians 1:21
2. The affections have been corrupted by sin. John 3:19; Job 15:14-16; Genesis 6:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Mark 7:21-23; Isaiah 53:2
3. The will is in bondage to sin.

It is important to appreciate that the will is controlled by the nature; what we do is determined by what we are; the fruit depends on the nature of the tree. The will is not an independent principle, but is always governed by other elements of the nature.

Consider a sheep and a vulture in a field of grass in which there is the carcass of a dead dog. The sheep eat the grass; the vulture eats the dog. Why? Simply because their choice is governed by their nature.

Will man then, with darkened mind and corrupted affections choose Christ and the way of holiness if left to his own free will? No! The faculty of choice is still his, and no one coerces him, but governed by his sinful nature he always makes the wrong choice in spiritual matters if left to himself. John 5:40,43,44; 6:44 (Compare Genesis 37:4). Job 14:4; Jeremiah 13:23. Note especially Romans 3:10-18.

Man is invited and indeed commanded to repent and believe the gospel. It is his responsibility and duty to do so; he cannot be saved unless he repents of sin and exercises faith in Jesus Christ. Yet because of his sinful state he is, of himself, unable to do so. This is the alarming condition of a sinner. His need is a supernatural divine work in his soul. This is how the Bible does explain the reception of Christ by some. See John 1:12,13.

The Bible clearly states what man (by his own will or power) cannot do:

<i>He cannot see the Kingdom of God</i>	John 3.3
<i>He cannot please God</i>	Romans 8:8
<i>He cannot know the things of God</i>	1 Corinthians 2:14
<i>He cannot say Jesus is Lord (i.e. as being real and genuine to him)</i>	1 Corinthians 12:3
<i>He cannot come to Christ</i>	John 6:44

The figures by which the Bible describes the work of salvation emphasize the Divine initiative and Divine sovereignty:

<i>It is a resurrection (i.e. a spiritual resurrection)</i>	Ephesians 2:5,6
<i>It is a new creation</i>	2 Corinthians 5:17
<i>It is regeneration (being born again)</i>	John 3:3-8
<i>It is a shining of light into darkness</i>	2 Corinthians 4:6
<i>It is a taking away the stony heart and the giving of a new heart and new spirit</i>	Ezekiel 36:26,27

Man is indeed totally depraved. Lost in every terrible sense of the word. His desperate need is a supernatural work of God's grace in his soul, to enlighten his mind, re-order his affections and liberate his will, so that he might understand the gospel and desire and choose Jesus Christ.

Unconditional Election

The fact of election

What do we mean by the doctrine of election? We mean that out of the ruined mass of fallen humanity God Almighty has chosen a people, a great innumerable company, which He intends to bring to salvation in and through Jesus Christ. It is one of the most prominent doctrines of scripture. The whole Old Testament is based upon the fact of election - God chose the nation of Israel for His own and passed by other nations. In the New Testament words indicating this doctrine are used continually (e.g. elect, chosen, ordained etc.)

The election taught in the Bible is seen to be:

- a. Personal 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Colossians 3:12; John 15:16; 2 Peter 1:10
- b. Sovereign Ephesians 1:5,11; Romans 9:15,16; Matthew 11:25,26
- c. Unconditional Acts 13:48; John 6:37; 10:26
- d. Eternal Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Jeremiah 31:3
- e. In Christ Ephesians 1:4

The Background to Election

It is vital that we see election against the background of the Fall. It is because this is overlooked or not understood that election is often thought of as "unfair". God is not now dealing with a race of innocents, but a race of rebels and sinners, all of whom deserve eternal damnation. God would be perfectly just to punish all with eternal damnation. He has however decided to save some out of the fallen race that His grace and mercy might be displayed in them. God is not obliged to save any. Rather than being criticized for not saving all, He is to be adored for saving any at all! To think that more people would be in heaven were it not for the decree of election is to totally misunderstand Biblical teaching. The fact is that none would be in heaven were it not for God's election.

Total Depravity (brought about by man's own sin) has rendered humanity in such a condition (see previous page) that when left to themselves men spurn the invitation of the gospel. Were it not for the intervention of sovereign grace all would perish, and all would deserve to perish.

When seen in this light election becomes a precious truth, a cause for praise. The root cause of a man's salvation is the electing grace of God (Romans 9:16). The root cause of a man's damnation is his own sin (Ezekiel 18:20).

The Results of Election

Sometimes human reaction is "if this is true then why preach the gospel; why exhort people to repent and believe?" This is seen to be invalid when we understand that God has not merely chosen people to salvation, but He has ordained that they should be saved through the gospel, through repentance, faith, obedience and holiness.

1 Peter 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:13,14; Ephesians 1:4.

No one has grounds for claiming to be saved unless they have exercised repentance toward God and

faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and have begun to walk in the path of discipleship. Paul said that he knew that the Thessalonians were elect (1 Thessalonians 1:4) but notice how he knew it, compare verses 5-10.

Observe that Romans 9 with its strong teaching on the sovereignty of Divine election is followed by Romans 10 with its free offer of the gospel, note verse 13. No one who has truly repented of their sins, trusted in Christ for salvation, and who is now endeavouring by God's grace to live a life of obedience to Him need fear that they are not elect. The fact that these fruits are in the life is the evidence that they are elect. On the other hand let no one boast that they are the Lord's and elect of God if these fruits are not evident in the life.

The Effects of Election

When a Christian rightly understands this truth it will produce:

- a. Great brokenness and humility before God.
- b. A quickening of his love and adoration of God.
- c. Encouragement in the service of God (see Acts 10:9,10)

Is Election a Discouragement to Those Who Wish to Be Saved?

It should not be; it need not be.

- a. This doctrine does not contradict or cancel the invitations of the gospel. God always keeps His promises - Acts 16:31; John 6:37; Matthew 11:28f; John 3:36.
- b. The warrant of faith is not a knowledge of our personal election, but the invitations and commands of God to come to Christ - Deuteronomy 29:29; 1 John 3:23
- c. The invitations of the gospel are expressed in such a way that no person need feel excluded - John 3:16; Romans 10:13.
- d. Where there is a desire to be saved, there is evidence that God is at work. But don't let it stop there!

Additional Note

Some feel that election must be explained by the word "foreknowledge" as used in Romans 8:29 and 1 Peter 1:2. The idea being that God elected those whom He knew would respond to the gospel when it was offered to them. A little thought however will reveal that we would then not have a doctrine of election but a doctrine of "ratification" i.e. God choosing those who chose themselves. Furthermore, the "foreknowledge" cannot be interpreted that way because:

- a. It is contrary to the rest of scripture which clearly states that believing is a result of election - Acts 13:48; John 6:37.
- b. The two verses appealed to in Romans and 1 Peter do not speak of "what" He foreknew (i.e. something about them; what they did), but "whom" He foreknew. That is God does something with respect to them.
- c. Repentance and faith are spoken of in the scriptures as God's gift to His people - Ephesians 2:8; Acts 11:13.

The word "know" is used in the Bible of loving (Genesis 4:1; Amos 3:2; Matthew 7:23). To foreknow therefore in these verses (Romans 8:29; 1 Peter 1:2) means to "love beforehand".

Particular Atonement

This third distinctive of Calvinism teaches that Christ offered Himself on the cross not for every person without exception, but specifically for the elect given to Him by the Father. It might be put this way: did Christ die to make the salvation of all merely possible, or did He die to render the salvation of His elect certain? It clarifies the issue to put the focus not on the extent of the atonement (for how many?) but on the intent (for what purpose?).

- those who believe that Christ died redemptively for all without exception believe in "universal redemption"
- those who believe that Christ died redemptively only for the elect believe in "particular redemption" or "limited atonement".

Some difficulties posed by "universal redemption"

1. It presents a redemption which doesn't really redeem; an atonement which doesn't atone; a ransom which doesn't actually set free.
2. It presents Christ's work on the cross as a partial failure; for if Christ died with the intent and purpose of saving every person without exception then he has manifestly failed.
3. It doesn't do justice to the Word of God, that the Bible doesn't present Christ's atonement as something which merely makes salvation possible, but as something which actually saves.
4. It does a disservice to the justice of God, for it suggests that Christ has been punished for the sins of those who are in hell and who are therefore being punished for their sins. God therefore exacts punishment for their sins twice - first in Christ and then in them.

Scriptures which indicate a "limit" on those for whom Christ died:

Isaiah 53:11,12; Matthew 20:28; 26:28; Hebrews 9:28. These verses speak of Christ dying for "many".

Scriptures which indicate that the "many" are a definite group:

John 10:11,15 note v 26; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25; Matthew 1:21

Scriptures which indicate the purpose of Christ's coming and death:

Matthew 1:21; Luke 19:10; 1 Timothy 1:15; 1 Peter 3:18. He came to save.

Scriptures which indicate what Christ's death actually accomplished:

Romans 5:10; Galatians 3:13; Hebrews 9:12

These verses indicate that Christ came not just to make the salvation of sinners possible but to actually save them. Not just to make sinners "redeemable" but to actually redeem them. Not just to make them "reconcilable" but to actually reconcile them. That this is not the state of all people would indicate that not all were the objects of Christ's atoning work, unless we are prepared to accept that His mission was less than successful. The faith by which a sinner becomes a partaker of Christ's salvation is itself the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8,9). It is part of the salvation purchased by

Christ for His people. That is why the Bible can speak in terms of a real, definite atonement; an atonement which actually atones, a redemption which actually redeems, a ransom which actually sets the prisoner free. For when Christ died He purchased all that was necessary to "bring to God" all those for whom He died. This included the grace of repentance and faith and the gift of the Spirit.

The significance of the terms used of Christ's atonement

1. Redemption This means the delivery from captivity and misery by the intervention of a price or ransom. Matthew 20:28
2. Reconciliation This means the renewing of friendship between parties previously hostile. Colossians 1:21,22.
3. Propitiation This means the turning away of wrath by means of an offering. To appease, pacify and reconcile Good in respect to His aversion to sin. 1 John 4:10.
4. "Dying for us" The Greek prepositions "hyper" and "anti" (usually translated "for") clearly imply substitution. Romans 5:8; Galatians 1:4; Titus 2:14; Matthew 20:28.

At the heart of the Biblical doctrine of the atonement is the idea of substitution: "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:5,6).

*"Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned He stood,
Sealed my pardon with His blood; Hallelujah, what a Saviour"*

True substitution and universal redemption cannot exist together. One or the other has to go!

As stated by John Owen, either Christ died for:

1. All the sins of some men.
2. Some of the sins of all men
3. All the sins of all men.

But does not the Bible speak of Christ dying for "all" and for "the world"? It does indeed; but the following needs to be remembered: "world" is frequently used in the Bible to speak of large numbers e.g. John 12:19; 1 John 5:19. It is also used of "Christian universalism" as opposed to "Jewish nationalism". e.g. John 3:16; 1 John 2:2; compare John 11:50-52.

What is the practical relevance of this doctrine?

1. It magnifies the work of Christ.
2. It gives hope in evangelism.
3. It ministers gloriously to a believer's assurance.
4. It deepens the believer's love for His Lord.
5. It enables us to offer to sinners a truly finished work.

"All" is often used to speak of all without distinction rather than all without exception. e.g. John 12:32; 1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:6

Effectual Call

This doctrine has to do with the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. While the salvation of God's elect had been secured and purchased by the blood of Christ it was necessary for this salvation to be applied to them, so that they might come into personal possession of that salvation. Bringing the elect to a reception of those blessings in Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Definition

The historical definition of effectual calling is given in the Westminster Shorter Catechism as follows:

"Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ and renewing our wills, He persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel."

The general call and the effectual call

Scripture distinguishes between what has been termed the "general" or "universal" call of the gospel and the "effectual" call.

The general call of the gospel can be rejected and indeed is rejected by men and women because of their sinful state. This call is seen in verses such as Isaiah 45:22; Matthew 11:28; Isaiah 55:1. This call is genuine and real and is to be issued by God's servants to all mankind. However, the response to this call is illustrated in the parable of Matthew 22:1-6.

But there is in Scripture an effectual call: that is a call which not only invites and summons but which also carries with it the power to ensure the desired response. The effectual call not only invites sinners to salvation but actually brings them to it. In this call the Holy Spirit makes the general call effectual; it comes through the gospel message to the elect of God in the power of the Holy Spirit. Compare 1 Thessalonians 1:4,5.

It is the effectual call to which the Bible refers most often when it speaks of "call", "called", and "calling". Compare Romans 8:28-30; 1 Corinthians 1:23-27; Hebrews 9:15.

The Bible uses the word "called" to describe Christians. Compare Romans 1:6,7; 1 Corinthians 1:9, Jude 1.

The effectual call is the result of God's purpose. The "purpose" of Romans 8:28 is obviously God's purpose of election referred to in Romans 9:11. The Bible says that God's purposes will most certainly come to pass. Compare Daniel 4:35; Isaiah 46:10,11; Job 23:13,14.

To speak of God "trying" to convert people; the Holy Spirit vainly struggling to achieve a goal he longs for but being frustrated and defeated by the unwillingness of men is to present a pathetic and pitiable God unknown in the Bible.

The Bible clearly teaches that all those given to Christ in the will and purpose of the Father will be brought to Him in salvation. Compare John 6:37,39; 17:2; Hebrews 2:13. The Holy Spirit works in

accordance with the purpose of the Father and the purchase of the son in applying salvation to His people.

The faith by which the sinner is joined to Christ and justified before God, is God's gift to the sinner and is inwrought by the grace of the Spirit.
Ephesians 2:8,9; Acts 18:27; Philipians 1:29.

Note that the same thing is also said about repentance - Acts 11:18; 5:31; 2 Timothy 2:25. This does not mean that God repents and believes for the sinner. The sinner is the one who must repent and believe; but it simply explains to us that the sinner does this "through grace". The Spirit of God operating within that sinner enables him and gives him the ability to repent and believe (He persuades and enables us...see definition). This is part of the work of effectual calling.

In effectual calling the Holy Spirit reverses the terrible effects of the Fall.

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| 1. He enlightens the mind | 2 Corinthians 4:6 |
| 2. He re-orders the affections | Deuteronomy 30:6 |
| 3. He liberates the will | Psalms 110:3 |

In doing these things and giving the grace of repentance and faith, the Holy Spirit brings the sinner to a willing and joyful acceptance of Christ. The Holy Spirit does not deal with sinners as robots but as human beings. His work in them is always in harmony with their human "make up". He does not force and coerce; He causes them to be willing. This calling of the Spirit is a holy calling (2 Timothy 1:9)

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| 1. It is a calling unto holiness | 1 Thessalonians 4:7 |
| 2. It is a calling out of darkness into light | 1 Peter 2:9 |
| 3. It is a calling to be saints | Romans 1:7 |
| 4. It is a calling into the fellowship of Christ | 1 Corinthians 1:9 |
| 5. It is a calling to follow Christ's example | 1 Peter 1:21 |

Perseverance of the Saints

What do we mean by this doctrine?

"Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit and given the precious faith of His elect unto, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end and be eternally saved..." (Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689).

Once having brought a person to walk the path of life in Christ, the path of faith, love, obedience and holiness, God will ensure that that person continues in that way until He takes him home to glory.

The necessity of perseverance

1. Perseverance in the faith is the acid test of Christian profession John 8:31; Hebrews 3:6-14
2. Jesus declared that only those who persevered to the end would be saved. Matthew 24:13
3. Perseverance is that which distinguishes the genuine believer from the false professor. 1 John 2:19.

There is such a thing as apostasy (Hebrews 6:1-9). In the light of what we shall consider below such people cannot have been truly in Christ in the first place. Remarkable religious experiences are not the real test of Christian profession. There is such a thing as false (temporary) faith (Matthew 13:20,21).

But true saints will persevere, and for the following reasons:

1. The purpose of God

The salvation of any person comes about ultimately because of the purpose of God. His election is according to God's purpose (Romans 9:11); effectual calling is according to God's purpose (Romans 8:28). If a man's salvation is purposed therefore by God (compare Acts 13:48) that salvation will be effected, for God always fulfills His purposes. Isaiah 46:10,11; Daniel 4:35.

2. The power of God

In John 10 Jesus links the believers security with both the purpose and the power of God, John 10:29. The Bible declares God to be Almighty (Genesis 17:1); we speak of Him as the omnipotent God. His power extends over things animate and inanimate. Because of the power of God nothing can separate the believer from the love of God, Romans 8:35-39.

3. The promises of God

God has promised that His people shall have everlasting life. He has promised that they will be "kept" and brought before His throne. Notice John 10:28; 5:24; 6:39; Matthew 28:20; Titus 1:1,2. God cannot go back on His promises and He declares them to be "yea and amen" in Jesus Christ, 2 Corinthians 1:20.

4. The prayers of Christ

The present ministry of Christ is that of intercession, Romans 8:34. Christ's prayers are always granted by the Father, John 11:41,42. What is Christ praying for now? See John 17:24. Notice also Hebrews 7:25. This verse is of great significance. It is not enough that we merely begin the Christian life, we must "persevere or perish" (Spurgeon). We must be "saved to the uttermost"; and that comes about through the intercession of the living Christ. Christ is praying that supplies of grace be given to His people, that they might persevere. He is praying that their faith shall not fail (see Luke 22:32). His prayer will be answered!

5. The permanence of the Spirit's indwelling

The Spirit of God is given to every believer to be in him and to be with him forever, John 14:16,17. Compare also Ephesians 4:30. None who are the temples of the Holy Spirit will end up in hell.

But note what this doctrine does not mean

- a. It does not mean that so long as a person has "asked Jesus to come into his heart", that he is therefore saved even though his life is not in the least changed. We must understand that true faith always reveals itself by works and spiritual fruit. James 2:14ff; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Matthew 7:21-23; Ephesians 2:8-10; 1 John 1:6; 2:3,4; 3:9,14,24; 5:2-4.
- b. It does not mean that a true Christian may not experience periods of backsliding and spiritual decline. Compare Luke 22:31ff.
- c. It does not mean that a Christian sits back and does nothing but is nevertheless kept by God. Notice the "conflict" terminology of the New Testament, Ephesians 6:11-20; 1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:4,5 etc.

Those who are careless and indifferent to spiritual things and disobedient to the Lord Jesus Christ can take no comfort from this doctrine. It speaks of the perseverance (i.e. the ongoing walk in faith, love, obedience and holiness) of the saints (i.e. those who are separated or committed to Christ). The expression "once saved always saved" is true only AS LONG AS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF "SAVED" IS BIBLICAL. If it is not then the popular expression can be highly dangerous and even fatal. Our forefathers were wiser in their terminology!

But this doctrine is both a stimulus (they **must** persevere) and a comfort (they **shall** be preserved) to all true believers. Grace shall keep them, protect them, enable them, strengthen them, preserve them and ultimately bring them home to glory.

*"Through many dangers toils and snares
I have already come;
Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home"
(John Newton.)*

Regeneration

Definition:

Regeneration is that act of God by which the principle of the new life is implanted in man, and the governing disposition of the soul is made holy, and the first exercise of this new disposition is secured. (L. Berkhof).

The Need for Regeneration

Jesus said "you must be born again" (John 3:7). "Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Why is this? Because of our condition "by nature": by nature we are - DEAD in trespasses and sins Ephesians 2:1. Compare Colossians 2:13. Note how this spiritual deadness expresses itself - Ephesians 2:2,3.

What is a spiritually dead man incapable of doing?

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| 1. He cannot receive the things of the Spirit | 1 Corinthians 2:14 |
| 2. He cannot love and serve God | Romans 8:7,8 |
| 3. He cannot come to Christ | John 6:44 |
| 4. He is the slave of sin, under its domination and power | Romans 6:16-23; John 8:34 |

These expressions do not mean that every person is debauched and wallowing in gross and flagrant sin. We may be cultured, well-mannered, educated and outwardly decent from a human perspective and yet be utterly dead spiritually and indifferent to the gospel. Hostility to God is often cloaked - sometimes even by religion! What a dead person needs is life!!

What does God do in regeneration?

He implants a new, living, holy principle within the soul.

- New - it wasn't there before.
- Living - so that it will make its presence felt
- Holy - it will operate counter to sin and incline us to holiness and God

Regeneration is a work of God in the soul unobserved by human eyes; it is known by its results, its effects. God describes this work as the giving of a new heart and a new spirit Ezekiel 36:25-27. The results:

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| 1. Recognition of our sinfulness and a humbling of ourselves | Ezekiel 36:31 |
| 2. A receptivity and sensitivity to the things of God | Ezekiel 36:26 |
| 3. Obedience to God (including positive response to the gospel) | Ezekiel 36:27 |
| 4. A new relationship with God | Ezekiel 36:28 |

Who is the agent in regeneration?

The Holy Spirit of God John 3:5. We cannot regenerate ourselves! Remember that the Holy Spirit is

the third person of the Holy Trinity. He is not a force, but a person. Note:

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| 1. Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "He" | John 14:16,17 |
| 2. He expresses Himself in scripture | Hebrews 3:7ff |
| 3. He may be grieved and resisted | Ephesians 4:30, Acts 7:51 |
| 4. He loves | Romans 15:30 |
| 5. He may be lied against | Acts 5:3 |

The reference "water" in John 3:5 is not a reference to baptism but undoubtedly refers back to Ezekiel 36 passage and has reference to purification and cleansing which is part of the work of regeneration. In the illustration of John 3:8 Jesus intimates 2 things:

1. There is a mystery connected with the work of the Spirit
2. There is sovereignty in the work of the Spirit.

He works as He wills. This is true of regeneration: He may quicken one yet not another.

What is the instrument in regeneration?

The truth which makes us free John 8:32. The Holy Spirit and the Word are like the surgeon and the instrument. You must have both for a successful operation.

What is the result of regeneration?

Remember what was said about Ezekiel 36. We may also observe the following:

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| 1. Faith in Christ | 1 John 5:1 |
| 2. Love of the Christian brothers | 1 John 5:1 |
| 3. Not practicing a sinful lifestyle | 1 John 3:9 |
| 4. Overcoming the world | 1 John 5:4 |

Regeneration is the fountainhead from which the stream of sanctification flows. In regeneration there is the implanting of the spiritual life: in sanctification the developing and strengthening of it.

Beware of error in this matter

Baptism cannot regenerate. No church ritual can regenerate. A human "decision" cannot regenerate. Responding to an altar-call cannot regenerate.

One may be religious yet unregenerate; emotional yet unregenerate; knowledgeable yet unregenerate.

Regeneration is a radical work. It affects the "heart", the "control centre" of the life.

"You must be born again".

Justification

Justification is one of the most important doctrines in the Word of God. It was at the heart of the great Protestant Reformation. If we do not understand this doctrine we do not really understand the Biblical Gospel.

Definition

"Justification is an act of God's free grace wherein He pardons all our sins, and accepts us as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone." (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

Justification is concerned with our legal status; our standing before God. The Greek word used in the New Testament is from the language of the law courts. It refers to a declaration that a person is just, free from guilt and exposure to punishment.

It is sometimes said that justification is a declarative act of God, i.e. it refers not to God doing something within a sinner (making him actually holy), but declaring something about the sinner, namely that he is accounted righteous.

Note: Deuteronomy 25:1; Proverbs 17:15; Isaiah 5:23; Luke 7:29; 16:15.

There are two elements in justification:

1. Remission (pardon)
2. Restoration to favour (accounted righteous)

Note how these two elements are symbolically presented in Zechariah 3:1-5.

God - The One Who Justifies

See Romans 8:33. This is important for God is "the supreme court" so to speak; there is no appeal from His judgement. His word is final and authoritative.

The Subjects of Justification

The same people are described in a number of ways:

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| a. God's elect | Romans 8:33 |
| b. Sinners | Romans 5:8,9 |
| c. The ungodly | Romans 4:5 |
| d. All who believe | Acts 13:38,39; Romans 4:5; 5:1; Galatians 2:16 |

The Ground or Basis of Justification

The blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ is the basis of the sinner's justification (this is sometimes referred to as the "obedience" of Christ). God is able to declare the believing sinner to be

righteous because He imputes (see below) the obedience of Christ to the believer. It is on account of that imputed obedience that God can declare a sinner to be righteous. Romans 3:24,25; 5:8,9; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9; Romans 5:16-19.

To impute means to reckon, to credit, to put to someone's account. Romans 4:6-8 speaks of a "non-imputation" of sin and the imputation of righteousness. The gospel is a message about "provided righteousness". Compare Romans 1:17; 3:21,22. Jesus Christ is "The Lord our Righteousness" - Jeremiah 23:6.

The Means of Justification

Faith (in Christ) alone. Compare Galatians 3:8; 2:16; Romans 4:5; 5:1; 3:28. Note: Faith is not meritorious; its value lies in the fact that it lays hold of Christ. Faith is the instrument by which the sinner receives and applies Christ and His righteousness to himself. It is not faith which saves him, but Christ made his through faith.

The Evidence of Justification

Good works, compare James 2:14-24; Ephesians 2:9-10. James and Paul are not in opposition to each other in the question of justification; they are dealing with different enemies. Paul is dealing with the person who insists that he may be justified by the works of the law. James is dealing with the man who claims he has justifying faith but whose life is devoid of the fruits of it, namely good works.

The Results of Justification

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Freedom from condemnation | Romans 8:1,33 |
| 2. Peace with God | Romans 5:1 |
| 3. Access to God | Romans 5:2 |
| 4. Acceptance of our persons | Romans 8:33,34 |
| 5. Title to eternal inheritance | Titus 3:5-7 |
| 6. Eventual glorification | Romans 8:30 |

There are no degrees in justification: no believer is more justified than any other. Justification is irreversible, unalterable, immediate (upon the sinner believing on Christ), forever. All believers share this common blessing.

The difference between justification and sanctification will be noted in the next study, as also the connection between them.

The Practical Value of the Doctrine of Justification

1. It tells us how we may have peace with God.
2. It is the foundation of all assurance.
3. It is the foundation of true, spiritual, Christian unity.

It moves the heart with admiration for God and with love and praise for such a great salvation.

Sanctification

Definitions

"Sanctification is the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness."
(Westminster Shorter Catechism)

"Sanctification is that continuous operation of the Holy Spirit by which the holy disposition imparted in regeneration is maintained and strengthened." A.H.Strong.

In justification the believer is declared by God to be righteous (see notes on justification); in sanctification the believer is actually made to be holy by God. We may say then that while justification has to do with our standing in the sight of God, sanctification has to do with our actual state.

Sanctification - Justification - Regeneration

These three vital elements of the great work of salvation are vitally related. We may view justification as the foundation of the Christian life, and sanctification as the superstructure. You cannot think of one without the other. Sanctification is the evidence of justification. To claim to be justified without giving evidence of sanctification is a delusion.

We may say that regeneration is foundational to both the other two, in that there could be no justification without regeneration for faith (through which we are justified) is the action of the new heart given in regeneration. Likewise there could be no sanctification without regeneration because sanctification is but the strengthening and increasing of that holy principle imparted to the soul at regeneration. You cannot be sanctified (holy) in the Biblical sense therefore without being born again. You may well be moral or religious without regeneration but not holy.

The Author of Sanctification

God Himself	1 Thessalonians 5:23; John 17:17; 2 Thessalonians 2:13
In particular God the Holy Spirit	Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18

The Standard of Sanctification

This may be expressed in a variety of ways:

God Himself	Matthew 5:48; 1 Peter 1:15,16
The Lord Jesus Christ	Romans 8:29
The revealed will of God in scripture	Romans 12:1,2

The fact that perfection cannot be attained in this life ought not to keep us from making perfection our constant aim.

The means of sanctification

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| 1. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ | Acts 15:9 |
| 2. The Word of God | John 17:17; Acts 20:32 |
| 3. Prayer | Psalms 51:10; Jude v.20 |
| 4. Christian fellowship | Hebrews 10:24,25; Proverbs 13:20 |
| 5. Providential experiences | Psalms 119:67,71 |

The necessity of sanctification

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|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Without it no man shall see the Lord | Hebrews 12:14 |
| 2. By it we bring glory to God | Matthew 5:16 |
| 3. By it we are a witness to others | Philippians 2:12-16; Titus 3:8 |

The Christian's responsibility in sanctification

Though sanctification is a work of God, yet He involves the Christian in it. The Christian is not passive but active in this great work. Compare Philippians 2:12,13

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|---|----------------------------------|
| He is to exercise discipline over himself | 1 Corinthians 9:25-27 |
| He is to put forth effort | 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14 |
| He is to fight | 1 Timothy 6:12 |
| He is to run the race | Hebrews 12:1 |

We must recognize of course that our effort is not to be in the energy of the flesh, not in self-confidence, but in complete dependence on God - Romans 8;13; Philippians 4:13

Sanctification is incomplete in this life

Though it effects every part of our life - 1 Thessalonians 5:23 - yet it is not complete - Philippians 3:12-15; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2,3

Sanctification is progressive in nature

- Biblical figures of speech indicate this: e.g. development from babyhood to adulthood - Hebrews 5:12-14; 1 Peter 2:1,2; Ephesians 4:14,15
- Biblical exhortations indicate this: 2 Peter 3:18; 1:5-8
- The prayers of Paul for his converts indicate this: Colossians 1:9,11; Philippians 1:9-11.
- The general teaching of the New Testament indicates this: 2 Corinthians 7:1; 3:18; Romans 12:2

Some attempted substitutes for sanctification

1. Morality
2. Religious ritualism
3. Hypocrisy

Adoption

Definition

"Adoption is an act of God's free grace, whereby we are received into the number, and have a right to all the privileges, of the sons of God" (Westminster Shorter Catechism)

Dr. Packer calls adoption "the highest privilege the gospel offers". A little thought will confirm this statement. It is one thing to be forgiven of our sins and acquitted at the bar of the Great Judge, that is wonderful in itself; but it is even more wonderful to be made a member of God's family, established as a son or daughter and given all the privileges of God's children.

The cause of our adoption from the Divine perspective

The predestinating purpose of God

Ephesians 1:5

- a. It is by Jesus Christ
- b. It is according to the good pleasure of His will
- c. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace (v6a)

The wonderful love of God

1 John 3:1,2

The cause of our adoption from the human perspective

Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ - John 1:12,13; Galatians 3:26

The great initial blessing of adoption

The gift of the Holy Spirit - Galatians 4:6; Romans 8:15

Note that the Holy Spirit produces in the Christian the consciousness of God as Father. This is the great revelation that Christ and the New Testament gives us. In the Old Testament the emphasis is on God as Creator, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy and Just One. These emphases remain in the New Testament but to them is added the new and wonderful dimension that God is the Father of His people (Matthew 6:9). This was the name most frequently on the lips of our Lord; it is the distinctive Christian name for God.

All that the name "Father" implies in the way of love, affection, tenderness, care, provision, fellowship and guidance is to be understood in that wonderful name.

Further Blessings of Adoption

a. Adopted sons are led by the Spirit

Romans 8:14

b. They are free from bondage and fear

Romans 8:15

c. They are assured of ultimate complete conformity to Christ

1 John 3:2; Romans 8:29

Ramification of our adoption

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|--|-----------------------|
| a. We must seek to imitate the Heavenly Father | Matthew 5:43-48 |
| b. We must be over comers | Revelation 21:7 |
| c. We must not partake of the world's defilement | 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 |
| d. We must expect the Father's discipline | Hebrews 12:4-11 |

The extraordinary privilege of our adoption

- a. We are made heirs of God! Romans 8:17. Compare Hebrews 1:2 and 1 Corinthians 3:21-23
- b. We are given an inheritance Ephesians 1:11 Compare 1 Peter 1:3f

The practical effects of this doctrine of adoption

- a. It gives us a powerful view of the depths of God's love and grace and should therefore produce love, praise and gratitude in us.
- b. It should challenge us to live as children of the King.
- c. It should give us confidence in our dealings with God.
- d. It gives us encouragement in times of suffering.
- e. It breaks down barriers among Christians.
- f. It gives us hope and assurance for the future.

Once we are members of God's family by grace we can never cease to be members of that family. We may lose the Father's favour through our sin and unfaithfulness, and we may lose the joy and blessing of fellowship with Him, but we remain children of God in Christ. He will chastise us for our sins in order to renew us to fellowship, but He will not disown His children. But it should ever be the aim of God's children to please the Father and to know the blessing of unbroken fellowship with Him.

A closing word on adoption

"For the sake of His only Son, Jesus Christ, God has been pleased to make all justified persons sharers in the grace of adoption, by means of which they are numbered with, and enjoy the liberties and privileges of children of God. Furthermore God's name is put upon them, they receive the Spirit of adoption, and they are enabled to come boldly to the throne of grace and cry "Abba Father". They are pitied, protected, provided for, and chastened by God as by a Father. He never casts them off, but as they remain sealed to the day of redemption, they inherit the promises as heirs of everlasting salvation."

(A Faith to Confess: the 1689 Confession in Modern English)

*But on my King of grace;
Not on the crown He giveth,
But on His pierced hands,
The Lamb is all the glory
In Immanuel's land.
(Anne R. Cousins)*

Of all the things the saints long for they long for most to see Jesus and to behold His glory - John 17:24.

Total Perfection

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|---|
| a. Freedom from all sin | Romans 8:29 | Word, thought and deed |
| b. "We shall be like Him" | 1 John 3:2 | Compare Revelation 11:22-27 . What a thought! |
| c. Freedom from all sorrow and pain | Revelation 21:4 | Compare Psalms 16:11 |
| d. Confirmation in holiness for ever | Revelation 22:11 | |

Unending and unbroken fellowship with God

Revelation 21:1-3; 22:3-5

The acknowledgement of believers as the children of God

Hebrews 11:16; 2:10-13; Matthew 10:32

Then will He own my worthless name
Before His Father's face,
And in the New Jerusalem
Appoint my soul a place.
(Isaac Watts)

The enjoyment of an environment suited to a glorified state

2 Peter 3:13

Applicatory thoughts

- How magnificent is God's purpose in salvation!
- What a future the Christian has to look forward to!
- What madness it is to turn away from such blessings!
- Here is a truth to give us songs in the night.