

DEPRAVED

Meet John and Edith (not their real names) ...

John and Edith were good friends of my parents. They were some of the most kind, caring and generous people I remember as a child growing up. You would have really liked John and Edith. But John and Edith did not know and believe in Christ. They were unsaved, lost. And now I am sad even writing this. But unless they believed in Christ late in life and I missed it, then they died not knowing God.

With our study today I intend to at least give us a starting point from which to work as we confront the great mystery of good and evil in every human on the planet, the depravity of humanity. You are depraved. And so am I. And so is your dear, old, sweet grandma.

- For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23 KJV).

Everybody misses the mark ... even John and Edith.

In the beginning we were created in God's image. This did not disappear when Adam and Eve rebelled, but it was tarnished and corrupted. Our ability to love, seek meaning and significance, be creative, invent, build, show mercy and kindness all flow from God. Our personalities are reflections of his image. A biblical understanding of depravity teaches that the image of God in our lives is now tarnished but not absent and that our relationship with God has been damaged beyond human repair.

To fully understand our salvation, we must understand depravity. We do not know how "saved" we are until we know how "lost" we were. If we get our theology wrong at this point, then we will be afraid to address, or even to admit to, the great darkness inside. In this spiritual ignorance we will live in denial, not realizing that our struggle with sin is part of the path of even the most faithful pilgrim. And not understanding the depth of the conflict, we will avoid the discussion and refuse to acknowledge the miserable wretch inside who fights daily against our growth in Christ.

- (Romans 7:24 ESV) **Wretched man that I am!** Who will deliver me from this body of death?
- (Revelation 3:17 ESV) For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, **not realizing that you are wretched**, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.



Depravity doesn't mean that goodness was obliterated which I think is a point of dissonance with many people. Within limitations people can still love, be merciful and practice grace and goodness, even good works. People still perform acts of heroism and sacrifice even to the point of death.

But none of this can make us right with God. **Depravity means that religion can never save us.** With the rebellion came death, a severed connection with God, no efficacious remedies on our part to bridge the gap between God and us. This is why a religion of good works, stated or practiced, cannot bring you to God, but can bring you great confusion as you may see extraordinary examples of people reflecting the image of God within that religion. Depravity means total vertical disconnect. However, even though we could do nothing to fix our problem, God could and did through Jesus Christ.

God intervened with his plan. We were helpless and hopeless, sinful, perverted, rebellious creatures. And at just the right time God demonstrated his love for us.

- Christ arrives right on time to make this happen. He didn't, and doesn't, wait for us to get ready. He presented himself for this sacrificial death when we were far too weak and rebellious to do anything to get ourselves ready. And even if we hadn't been so weak, we wouldn't have known what to do anyway (Romans 5:6 MSG).

Don't think for a minute that God isn't aware of all the darkness that was and is inside you. You may be afraid to let someone else look inside, or very likely be afraid to look yourself, but you should never worry that God will turn away from you. There will be no surprises for him. Christ paid it all at the cross. All your sins. All mine. Until we understand the damage done we cannot understand the repair that was made.

Depravity helps us to understand the damage that was done to us as individuals, the human race as a whole and the entire planet as a result of the rebellion of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

*I've seen the needle and the damage done,
a little part of it in everyone,
ooh, ooh, the damage done.
(Neil Young - Needle and the Damage Done)*

