

## I. TOTAL DEPRAVITY

**A. Definition:** *Apart from God's saving grace, fallen man is spiritually blind and dead in sin, unable to repent and believe, unable to receive divine grace, and corrupt in every aspect of his humanity.*

- <sup>WCF 6.2</sup> By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion, with God, and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the parts and faculties of soul and body.
- <sup>WCF 6.3</sup> They being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed; and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature, conveyed to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation.
- <sup>WCF 6.4</sup> From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil, do proceed all actual transgressions.
- <sup>WCF 9.3</sup> Man, by his fall into a state of sin, hath wholly lost all ability of will to any spiritual good accompanying salvation; so as, a natural man, being altogether averse from that good, and dead in sin, is not able, by his own strength, to convert himself, or to prepare himself thereunto.

## B. Scripture Proofs

- <sup>Gen. 6:5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every intent of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually. [Cf. Gen. 8:21; Jer. 17:9; Mt. 19:17]
- <sup>John 3:3</sup> Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”
- <sup>John 6:63</sup> It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and *they* are life. <sup>64</sup> But there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him. <sup>65</sup> And He said, “Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.” [Cf. Rom. 3:10; 8:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:3; 1 Cor. 2:14]
- <sup>Eph. 2:1</sup> And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, <sup>3</sup> among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. <sup>4</sup> But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

## C. Common Objections

1. If all sinners are *totally* depraved, how can some sinners be *more* or *less* ungodly than others?
2. If all sinners are *totally* depraved, how can one person be *closer* to the kingdom than another?
3. If all sinners are *totally* depraved, why do many unbelievers perform *good* works?
4. If all sinners are unable to repent and believe, how can God justly require them to do so?

5. If all sinners are unable to repent and believe, what is the point of preaching the gospel to them?
6. Unrepentant sinners are not *unable* to believe; they are *unwilling* to believe.

## II. UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

**A. Definition:** *God eternally chose a people in Christ entirely of free grace, without any conditions.*

- **WCF 3.1** God, from all eternity, did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will freely, and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.
- **WCF 3.3** By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death.
- **WCF 3.5** Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, God, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to His eternal and immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of His will, hath chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of His mere free grace and love, without any foresight of faith or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature, as conditions, or causes moving Him thereunto; and all to the praise of His glorious grace.

## B. Proofs

- **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- **John 10:25** Jesus answered them, “I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father’s name, they bear witness of Me. <sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.”
- **Acts 13:48** Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. [Cf. 2 Cor. 2:14-16]
- **Rom. 9:13** As it is written, “Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.” <sup>14</sup> What shall we say then? *Is there* unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! <sup>15</sup> For He says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.” <sup>16</sup> So then *it is* not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. <sup>17</sup> For the Scripture says to Pharaoh, “For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.” <sup>18</sup> Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. <sup>19</sup> You will say to me then, “Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?” <sup>20</sup> But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed *it*, “Why have you made me like this?” <sup>21</sup> Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? <sup>22</sup> *What* if God, wanting to show *His* wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, <sup>23</sup> and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of

mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, <sup>24</sup> even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? [Cf. 1 Cor. 1:27-31]

- Eph. 1:3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ, <sup>4</sup> just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will. . . . <sup>11</sup> In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will.
- Eph. 2:8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, <sup>9</sup> not of works, lest anyone should boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. [Cf. Acts 5:30; Phil. 1:23; 2 Tim. 2:24-25]
- 1 Pet. 2:7-8 Therefore, to you who believe, *He is* precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” <sup>8</sup> and “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. [Cf. Prov. 16:4; Rom. 11:7]

### C. Objections

1. A *just & loving* God would never foreordain a sinner to hell, much less *harden* a sinner’s heart.
2. This view of divine sovereignty denies human choice and, therefore, human responsibility.
3. This view of divine sovereignty would make God the author of sin, since He foreordained it.
4. If it is God’s will for some sinners to perish, why does He say, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live”? (Ezek. 33:11; Cf. Mt. 23:37)
5. If it is God’s will for some sinners to perish, how do you account for 2 Pet. 3:9 and 1 Tim. 2:1-6?
6. If *faith, repentance, and good works* are gifts of God, then how can heaven truly be a *reward*?
7. This doctrine undermines the *conditionality* of the gospel offer (Lk. 13:3; Acts 16:31; 1 Jn. 5:12).
8. Why should I *repent* and *believe* if I might *not* be elect?

## III. LIMITED ATONEMENT

A. **Definition:** Christ laid down His life for His sheep, given to Him by His Father before time began.

- WCF 8.5 The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, has fully satisfied the justice of His Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for those whom the Father has given unto Him.

- **WLC 38** Why was it requisite that the Mediator should be God? **A.** It was requisite that the Mediator should be God, that he might sustain and keep the human nature from sinking under the infinite wrath of God, and the power of death; give worth and efficacy to his sufferings, obedience, and intercession, and to satisfy God's justice, procure his favour, purchase a peculiar people, give his Spirit to them, conquer all their enemies, and bring them to everlasting salvation.

## **B. Scripture Proofs**

- **Isa. 53:4** Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. <sup>5</sup> But He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. <sup>6</sup> All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. . . <sup>11</sup> He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup> Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. [Cf. Mt. 26:28]
- **Matt. 1:21** And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.
- **John 10:14** I am the good shepherd; and I know My *sheep*, and am known by My own. <sup>15</sup> As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. . . <sup>26</sup> But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you.
- **John 17:1** Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, <sup>2</sup> as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. <sup>4</sup> I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. <sup>5</sup> And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was. <sup>6</sup> I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You. <sup>8</sup> For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received *them*, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me. <sup>9</sup> I pray for them. I do not pray for the world but for those whom You have given Me, for they are Yours. <sup>10</sup> And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them.”
- **John 19:30** So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.
- **Eph. 5:23-27** For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. <sup>24</sup> Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, <sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. [Cf. Acts 20:28; Gal. 2:20; John 15:13]

### **C. Common Objections**

1. John says that Jesus “is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2) and that “the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world” (1 Jn. 4:14).
2. John says that, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (Jn. 3:16-17).
3. Paul says that “we trust in the living God, who is *the* Savior of all men, especially of those who believe.” (1 Tim. 4:10).
4. Paul says “we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” (2 Cor. 5:14-15).
5. Paul says, “Therefore, as through one man’s offense *judgment came* to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man’s righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life” (Rom. 5:18).
6. The Epistle to the Hebrews says that Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice “once for all” (Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10).
7. Peter warns of false teachers who “will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, *and* bring on themselves swift destruction.” (2 Pet. 2:1; Cf. Jude 4-5).
8. This doctrine is destructive in that it limits the atonement.
9. This doctrine undermines the free offer of the gospel, since Jesus paid for sins in “exact change”.
10. This doctrine ignores certain “fringe benefits” of Christ’s death enjoyed by non-elect persons.

### **IV. IRRESISTIBLE GRACE**

**A. Definition:** The Holy Spirit will certainly and irresistibly *apply* redemption to all for whom Christ has *accomplished* it; namely those elected by the Father.

1. **WLC 59** Who are made partakers of redemption through Christ? **A.** Redemption is certainly applied, and effectually communicated, to all those for whom Christ hath purchased it; who are in time by the Holy Ghost enabled to believe in Christ according to the gospel.
2. **WLC 67** What is effectual calling? **A.** Effectual calling is the work of God’s almighty power and grace, whereby (out of his free and special love to his elect, and from nothing in them moving him thereunto) he doth, in his accepted time, invite and draw them to Jesus Christ, by his word and Spirit; savingly enlightening their minds, renewing and powerfully determining their wills, so as they (although in themselves dead in sin) are hereby made willing and able freely to answer his call, and to accept and embrace the grace offered and conveyed therein.

## **B. Scripture Proofs**

- **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- **John 3:6** That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit. [Lk. 1:44]
- **John 6:37** All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. <sup>38</sup> For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. <sup>39</sup> This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”
- **Rom. 8:29** For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.
- **2 Cor. 4:3** But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, <sup>4</sup> whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them. . . . <sup>6</sup> For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.
- **Eph. 2:4** But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, <sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), <sup>6</sup> and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.
- **1 Thes. 2:13** For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe. [Cf. 1 Thes. 1:4; 2 Thes. 2:13-14]
- **James 1:18** Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.

## **C. Common Objections**

1. To *truly* love someone, you must have the capacity to *not* love that person.
2. True freedom requires the freedom to despise Christ.
3. Psalm 110:3 says “Your people shall be willing in the day of Your power.”
4. This doctrine implies that God *forces* Himself on His elect.
5. This doctrine is *inconsistent* with human experience (i.e. “making a choice”) during conversion.

6. What about the individuals in Scripture who are said to “resist the Holy Spirit”? (Acts 7:51).

## V. PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

### A. Definition: See WCF 17.1 below.

1. WCF 17.1 They, whom God hath accepted in His Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace; but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved.
2. WCF 17.2 This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ; the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them; and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which ariseth also the certainty and infallibility thereof.
3. WCF 17.3 Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God's displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts; have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves.

### B. Scripture Proofs

- Ps. 37:23 The steps of a *good* man are ordered by the LORD, and He delights in his way. <sup>24</sup> Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the LORD upholds *him* with His hand.
- Matt. 7:21 Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ [Cf. 1 John 2:19]
- John 6:39 This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. <sup>40</sup> And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
- John 10:27 My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. <sup>28</sup> And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. <sup>29</sup> My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of My Father's hand.
- Rom. 8:29 For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. . . . <sup>37</sup> Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, <sup>39</sup> nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- **Phil. 1:6** Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ. [Cf. 1 Cor. 1:4-8]
- **Heb. 6:4** For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup> if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame. <sup>7</sup> For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; <sup>8</sup> but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned. <sup>9</sup> But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. [Cf. Matt. 13:18-23; 1 Tim. 5:24]
- **1 Pet. 1:3** Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

### **C. Common Objections**

1. Why does Paul tell the Corinthians that Christ will “confirm you to the end” (1:8) and yet later issue the warning, “Therefore, let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (10:12)?
2. If Simon the Magician (Acts 8:9-24) “believed” and yet told by Peter “Your money perish with you!” can we not say that he lost his salvation?
3. Why do the Apostles constantly urge believers to “give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away” (Heb. 2:1-2; 3:6, 14; 4:14; 10:23) and use phrases like “unless you believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1-2)?
4. How do you explain the apostates from the Epistle to the Hebrews (6:1-9; 10:26-31), who are said to be “partakers of the Holy Spirit,” “sanctified by the blood of the covenant,” and members of “His people”?
5. A true believer who cannot choose to fall away and reject Christ has been transformed from a rational creature into a robot.
6. The notion of “once saved, always saved” gives false hope to nominal Christians who have no interest in pursuing “the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14).
7. Assurance of eternal salvation will cause Christians to be sluggish in their pursuit of holiness.