

## BRUSHFIRES | WEEK 3

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Core Doctrine: Human Sinfulness – Total Depravity

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**Verse:**

**Romans 3:10–12 (CSB)**

“As it is written:  
There is no one righteous, not even one.  
There is no one who understands;  
there is no one who seeks God.  
All have turned away;  
all alike have become worthless.  
There is no one who does what is good,  
not even one.”

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**Book Context:**

Paul’s letter to the Romans is a sweeping explanation of the human condition and the hope found in Christ. In the early chapters (1–3), Paul builds a courtroom case against all humanity, exposing universal guilt. Quoting the Psalms, Romans 3:10–12 stands as a crushing verdict: none are righteous, none are seeking God, all are corrupted by sin. This passage lays the foundation for why salvation must be an act of divine grace—because left to ourselves, we would never seek or find God on our own.

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**Core Doctrine Explanation:**

The doctrine of **Total Depravity** teaches that every part of human nature—our minds, wills, and emotions—has been corrupted by sin. It does not mean we are as bad as we could possibly be, but it does mean that sin touches every aspect of who we are. We are not spiritually neutral. We are spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1).

Romans 3 paints a bleak but honest picture: humanity is not a mix of good and bad seeking to improve—we are rebels against our Creator, unwilling and unable to choose

God apart from His intervention. No one is righteous. No one understands. No one seeks after God on their own.

Understanding total depravity does not lead to despair—it leads to awe. Because if God saved us, it wasn't because He found something worthy in us. It was because He loved us when there was nothing lovable to find. Total depravity magnifies total grace.

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### **Danger of Not Holding to the Core Doctrine – Week 3: Human Sinfulness – Total Depravity**

If we lose sight of the depth of our sin, we will inevitably shrink the beauty of grace. The gospel becomes less about rescue and more about improvement. Jesus becomes less a Savior and more a coach. And Christianity becomes less a miracle and more a moral program.

The danger here is often masked in kindness. We want to believe the best about people. We want to affirm dignity, value, and potential. But when we minimize the seriousness of sin, we minimize the need for a Savior. We start to believe that people are basically good, just needing a little guidance or a little inspiration. And when we do, we quietly shift from proclaiming new birth to prescribing self-help.

Sometimes we even try to protect God's reputation—avoiding words like “wrath,” “judgment,” or “depravity” because we fear they'll make Him seem harsh. But in softening the truth, we strip the cross of its meaning. If sin isn't truly deadly, then Christ's death wasn't truly necessary.

Without total depravity, the gospel loses its urgency. Evangelism loses its weight. Worship loses its wonder. And holiness becomes optional.

But when we rightly see our sin, we see grace for what it is: shocking, undeserved, and utterly transformative. We are not good people getting better. We are dead people brought to life.

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### **Conversational Evangelism:**

In everyday conversations, many people think of humanity as “basically good.” A gentle way to open a conversation is to ask,

“Do you think people are naturally good—or is there something deeper broken inside all of us?”

When they answer, you can follow up with,

“If we were good on our own, why do you think the world is still so broken?”

This opens the door to explain that our problem isn’t lack of education, opportunity, or effort—it’s a heart in rebellion against God. And only Christ can give a new heart.

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### **Call to Action:**

This week, reflect on your own helplessness apart from Christ. Where are you tempted to think you just needed a “push” instead of a resurrection?

Let the reality of your total depravity magnify your gratitude for grace. Spend time worshiping God for His mercy—not because you earned it, but because He freely gave it.

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### **Fire Starter Question:**

When did you first realize that your greatest need wasn’t improvement, but a new heart—and how has that changed the way you view grace?