

BRUSHFIRES | WEEK 13

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Core Doctrine:

Human Sinfulness – Total Depravity

Verse:

Ephesians 2:1–3 (CSB)

“And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.”

Book Context:

Paul’s letter to the Ephesians begins with a grand declaration of God’s sovereign grace. But before proclaiming the glory of salvation, Paul reminds believers of the horror of what they were saved from. In Chapter 2, verses 1–3, he outlines the condition of every human soul apart from Christ—not weak, but dead; not sick, but enslaved; not morally neutral, but under God’s wrath. These verses leave no room for boasting, only a desperate need for mercy and a clear view of why grace is truly amazing.

Core Doctrine Explanation:

Total Depravity means that sin has affected every part of human nature—our mind, heart, will, and desires. It doesn’t mean every person is as evil as they could be, but it does mean no part of us is untouched by sin. We are spiritually dead—unresponsive, unable to revive ourselves, and in desperate need of resurrection.

Ephesians 2 reveals that apart from Christ, we are not just lost—we are under the power of Satan, dominated by fleshly desires, and storing up wrath. Even our thoughts betray us. Even our best efforts fall short. We are not seekers of God—we are fugitives from Him.

This doctrine is hard to hear, but it is the doorway to real humility and real worship. Because if God saved us, it wasn’t because He saw potential. It was because He loved the unlovable and gave life to the dead. Only when we grasp the gravity of our sin can we begin to see the glory of our salvation.

Danger of Not Holding to the Core Doctrine – Week 13: Human Sinfulness – Total Depravity

If we do not believe we were spiritually dead, then we will never believe we were truly rescued. And when grace becomes unnecessary, the gospel becomes unimpressive.

One of the greatest dangers in the modern church is mistaking depravity for dysfunction. We treat sin as a habit to be broken instead of a nature to be reborn. And when we do, we trade

in the gospel for a therapy session. We offer people tips for self-improvement when what they need is a miracle.

Sometimes this minimization of sin comes from compassion—we don't want people to feel condemned. But if we soften the truth to protect people's feelings, we steal from them the chance to feel awe at the grace of God. Because the good news only shines brightly in the darkness of the bad news.

Paul's language in Ephesians 2 is not symbolic. He says we were dead. That means no one comes to God on their own. No one simply "decides" to follow Jesus without first being awakened by the Spirit. If we reject this, we'll begin to assume that people are saved by persuasive preaching, emotional moments, or moral reform.

But the truth is more humbling: salvation is resurrection. And you can't resurrect yourself.

To deny total depravity is to overestimate man and underestimate God. But to embrace it is to fall on our knees and say, "But God, who is rich in mercy..." (Ephesians 2:4).

Conversational Evangelism:

Instead of trying to convince someone they're a sinner, try asking, "Why do you think people—no matter how smart or well-intentioned—can't seem to fix what's wrong in the world?"

Then offer this thought:

"What if the problem isn't just what we do—but who we are deep down? What if we need more than advice—we need a new heart?"

This opens the door to talk about the true nature of sin and why Christ didn't come just to teach, but to rescue.

Call to Action:

This week, ask God to show you any areas where you're still clinging to self-reliance. Are you trying to be better—or trusting that Christ alone is your life?

Then worship Him not just for helping you—but for raising you. You were dead. Now you live. Never forget what He saved you from.

Fire Starter Question:

What part of your old life reminds you most clearly that you were once spiritually dead—and how can sharing that memory magnify God's grace in your story?