

**Biblical Soteriology:
An Overview and Defense of the
Reformed Doctrines of Salvation**

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Total Depravity, Part 2

**ANALYSIS OF THE ARGUMENT SUPPORTING
THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY (part 2)**

II. EXTENT OF DEPRAVITY

A. Totality of Humanity -- The Fall had universal repercussions, resulting in the sinfulness of every member of mankind.

1. Adults, and people in general — Every person's life, without exception, is marked by sin.

“For there is no man who does not sin” (1 Kgs. 8:46; 2 Chr. 6:36).

While these verses may be thought of as restricted to the particular time in which they were written/said, it should be recognized that the extent of depravity to every existing person at any particular point in time establishes the principle of the universality of depravity. Further, since this assertion appears in a prayer of intercession on behalf of the people of God, and refers to the potential future sins of those people, it seems reasonable to conclude that it applies to all future generations of God's people. By extension, arguing from lesser to greater (as the Bible itself so often does), it also applies to all those who are not part of God's people, who blatantly do not worship the true God.

“If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?” (Ps. 130:3).

This rhetorical question implies that no one could stand if God marked or counted iniquities. Based on personal merit, every person turns out a damnable sinner.

“And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight no man living is righteous” (Ps. 143:2).

No living person is righteous, all are marked by sin. While arguments have been made that verses like this one are poetic hyperbole, the point of the psalm seems clear: even David, the man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14), relied on God’s graciousness and mercy (“For the sake of Thy name, O Lord” [v. 11]) to pass over his sin. Thus, the direct application of this statement in non-hyperbolic form to all mankind is highly appropriate.

“Who can say, ‘I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin’?” (Prov. 20:9).

This format of this rhetorical question, typical of Hebrew literary style, expects the answer “no one.” No one has cleansed his heart. No one is pure from sin. The question does not inquire as to the identity of some “exception” to the rule, but rather asserts the rule. The implied answer “absolutely no one” indicates that all men rely on God’s mercy and forgiveness if they are to be saved.

“Indeed there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins” (Eccl. 7:20).

This statement was made in time and space, and some may argue that it’s truth is restricted to the time of its utterance. Also, it may be proverbial, and thus open to qualification by other true statements. But the context of this wisdom saying does not offer any suggestion of qualification. Indeed, the tenor of Ecclesiastes as a whole teaches the insufficiency of all human endeavors, including human righteousness. Moreover, the nature of wisdom literature is to present truths that have stood the test of time, in order that these truths might benefit those who come later (during which time the same truth will still apply). Therefore,

the best interpretation seems to be that everyone sins at some point and to some degree.

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’” (John 14:6).

Jesus made this statement in the context of belief in him (John 14:1,10-12). For Jesus to be the only way to God, it must be true that no one can get to God without believing in Christ. More particularly, the context indicates that no one can get to heaven without the benefits conveyed through faith/belief in Christ, specifically such things as: the Holy Spirit (John 14:16-17); obedience through love and union with Christ (John 14:21-24; 15:1-10); and cleansing through the gospel (John 15:3). Since no one can get be saved apart from the cleansing forgiveness of the gospel, and since no one can be obedient apart from union with Christ, no one’s own merit is sufficient for salvation. Sin’s curse lays heavily on every person. Since God is just and would receive anyone who was truly innocent in his eyes, it must be true that no one is innocent in his eyes except those who are in Christ.

Coming to the Father through Christ also references salvation specifically through Christ’s atonement on the cross — the very event to which Jesus was going at the moment he spoke these words, and the very event for which these words were intended to prepare his disciples (John 13:36–14:1; 15:11). His going to the Father (John 14:2-3) was intended to prepare the way (John 14:6) by which sinners could be with the Father. Since everyone must take that way to the Father, everyone has sin which the atonement must cover. No member of mankind can approach the Father without Christ because every member of mankind is guilty of sin.

“We have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one . . . all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one’” (Rom. 3:9-10,12).

In its original context, this quote (Pss. 14:1-3 and 53:1-3) referred primarily to the enemies of “my people,” indicating that

not all men fell into this category. Certainly not every person on earth ate up the Lord's people as bread (Pss. 14:4; 53:4). Yet Paul's point in the context of Romans 3 was that no one — Jew or Greek, God's people or other — was innocent. He infallibly interpreted and applied Old Testament Scripture to prove the natural state of all men apart from faith in God and Christ. Absolutely no one is free from sin, not even one is innocent.

Also, Paul applied this Scripture which greatly preceded him in time to the people of his own time. This strongly asserts that the Scripture's truth applies to all men at all times, even continuing today. Thus, depravity still exists in every member of the fallen human race.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned . . .” (Rom. 5:12).

Paul asserted that people die because they are corrupted by sin. Since all men die, all men are guilty in God's eyes. This held true even for the sinless Christ: he died only when sin had been imputed to him on the cross. All men die, therefore all men are corrupted by sin.

Certain exceptions to death as we normally experience it have existed (Gen. 5:24; 2 Kgs. 2:11-12) and will exist again (1 Cor. 15:51-53; 1 Thess. 4:15-17). This does not invalidate Paul's point. The bodily change that must occur in those who receive their glorified bodies without first experiencing natural death is necessary because their natural bodies are subject to corruption caused by sin (1 Cor. 15:54-57). Moreover, only believers, who are forgiven, have undergone and will undergo this change.

“But the scripture has shut up all men under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Gal. 3:22).

Everyone is sinful. For this reason, no one comes to the Father except through Christ (compare John 14:6). In the context of Galatians 3, Paul offered this argument to prove why only Christ inherits the gospel's blessings, including salvation (Gal. 3:8). No person can deserve these blessings on his own because every

person is shut up under sin (whether imputed guilt, actual corruption, or actual transgression).

“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:3).

Everyone who is not a Christian is part of “the rest,” and is a child of wrath. Everyone who is a Christian used to be a child of wrath. Since everyone falls into the category of being a child of wrath, at least initially, it is true that every member of humanity is rightly subject to God’s wrath apart from Christ. Thus, everyone bears the guilt of sin.

“If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:8-10).

If anyone of the Christians to whom this letter was written said that he was without sin, he called God a liar. Since God is not a liar, then all Christians have sinned. If all Christians have sinned, it follows by extension that the unbelievers, from among whom the Christians were called, must also all be sinners.

2. Children — The Bible never excludes children on the basis of their age from general accusations of sinfulness, and it never calls children “innocent.” [See also section II.A.1 of this outline, immediately above.]

“The intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Gen. 8:21).

Evil intent is sinful. The fallen human condition is evil and therefore sinful, even from youth. Far from innocent, youths are evil. The only apparent exception to this rule in the context of Genesis was Noah, who found favor enough with God (Gen. 6:8) that God did not destroy him or his family. However, it must be borne in mind that the flood was not an eternal judgment based on personal merit, but a temporal judgment based on individual righteousness. This is not splitting hairs —

an individual may act righteously by faith (Rom. 1:17; 3:22-26; 4:5-11; 9:30-32; Heb. 11:6) and through God's grace (Phil. 2:13), and not by his own personal abilities and merit. In fact, Hebrews 11:7 explicitly states that Noah's righteousness was due to his faith.

“Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity” (Ps. 51:5).

David wrote this psalm to express his grief and repentance over his sin with Bathsheba (Ps. 51:1). Even David, a man after God's own heart (1 Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), was born into iniquity, and sinful from the time of his birth. One ought to conclude that David was typical of infants in this respect (certainly the infants of pagans are not somehow more righteous than the infants of God's covenant people), and thus that all people are sinful from the time they are born.

This verse does not refer to some sin of David's mother or father, or of anyone else besides David — the context of the entire psalm is explicitly David's own sin. In the verses both before and after this one, David laments his own sinfulness, and desires to be cleansed from it.

The argument that this is poetic hyperbole might be also be raised. While this is a possibility, it is a somewhat problematic one. First, the rest of the psalm does not appear to be hyperbolic. Second, there does not appear to be any clear biblical teaching that would have identified to David's readers that his words were intended hyperbolically. If he intended hyperbole, he was quite likely to have been misunderstood. In fact, the New Testament teaches that the Jews believed in the possibility of prenatal sin (John 9:2). For hyperbole to be an effective communicative device, it must be recognized as hyperbole, but it does not appear that this verse would have been so recognized.

“The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth” (Ps. 58:3).

That a person may be estranged, or “go astray,” from the womb, and that liars go astray from birth, indicates that at least some

infants are not the innocent wonders they appear to be. Rather, they are children of Adam, sinners by nature, and stand condemned before God. [Regarding the charge of poetic hyperbole, see the discussion of Ps. 51:5 immediately above.]

3. The Unborn — God holds every human, born or unborn, to the same standard of righteousness. Even fetuses bear Adam’s imputed guilt and are actually corrupted by sin.

“In sin my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5).

Besides teaching that life begins at conception, this verse asserts that sinfulness does as well. [Regarding the charges that this refers to David’s mother’s sin and/or is poetic hyperbole, see the discussion of this verse in section II.A.1.2 of this outline.]

“The wicked are estranged from the womb; these who speak lies go astray from birth” (Ps. 58:3).

The phrase “from the womb” seems to refer temporally to the time one spends in the womb, rather than to the time one comes “from” (out of) the womb. If one can be estranged from the time that one is in the womb, then there must be a basis for this estrangement. Otherwise, God would not estrange unborn infants. In the context of the psalm, the estrangement appears to be based on sinfulness. Therefore, fetuses can be guilty of sin. This depravity does not result from prenatally committed sin, because Paul wrote of the unborn Jacob and Esau that they had done nothing, either good or bad (Rom. 9:11). Adam’s sin did result, however, in his posterity being born actually corrupted by sin (Rom. 5:19-20), and in their bearing the imputed guilt of his sin (Rom. 5:12-19). [See the discussions of: Rom. 5:12-14 in I.B.2.b of this outline; Rom. 5:15-19 in section I.B.2.c of this outline; and Rom. 5:19-20 in section I.B.2.d of this outline.]

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me’” (John 14:6).

Even infants and fetuses need to approach God through the shed blood of Christ, meaning that even infants and fetuses need forgiveness salvation from the punishment of sin. Jesus did not

come to save the righteous, but sinners (Matt. 9:13; Mark 2:17; Luke 5:32). If even fetuses must be saved, then they are sinners.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned . . . even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of Adam’s offense” (Rom. 5:12,14).

Death results from sin, and fetuses die. While fetuses have done nothing, either good or bad (Rom. 9:11), they are actually corrupted by sin, and they bear the imputed guilt of Adam’s sin. [See the discussions of: Rom. 5:12-14 in I.B.2.b of this outline; Rom. 5:15-19 in section I.B.2.c of this outline; and Rom. 5:19-20 in section I.B.2.d of this outline.]

“For though the twins were not yet born, and had not done anything, good or bad, . . . it was said to her, ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written, ‘Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated’” (Romans 9:11-13).

God determined to hate Esau before Esau had ever committed any sin. Many argue that this passage deals with the selection of one people group over another for special blessing, and not with individual salvation, mercy or condemnation. While the original context from which Paul quoted (Mal. 1:2-3) dealt with the nations Israel and Edom, it used the metaphor of the their respective patriarchs Jacob and Esau in these particular verses. Thus, Paul rightly adopted this passage to demonstrate his point about individual salvation in Romans 9.

Romans 9 deals with the individual people Jacob and Esau, not with the nations that came from them. This is evident for several reasons. First, the passage speaks of Jacob and Esau as individuals who were not yet old enough to perform good or bad acts (Rom. 9:11). Second, it explains God’s decision as one of mercy toward an individual man (Rom. 9:15-16). Third, the contrasting example of hardening (as opposed to mercy) clearly deals with the heart of only one man, Pharaoh, not a nation (Rom. 9:17-18). Fourth, Paul anticipated an objection to God’s fault finding and condemnation people to hell (Rom. 9:19-23), not to God’s decision to withhold special blessing from a nation.

Fifth, Paul defended God by asserting God's right to condemn individuals to hell (Rom. 9:22-23), not by defending his right not to bless certain nations.

While God's choice of Jacob over Esau did have national implications, the actual choices were made about individuals, not nations. The choice God made was to love the individual Jacob and to hate the individual Esau. That God granted Esau certain temporal blessings during his life does not imply that God did not hate Esau as an individual. That Esau was ultimately lost is evident from Hebrews 12:14-17 which teaches that Esau came short of God's grace and did not repent, and which uses him as an example of one who will not see the Lord.

Thus, God's "hatred" of Esau is God's hatred of the individual person even before that person's commission of sin. Since God's hatred for Esau was explicitly just (Rom. 9:14), Esau deserved to be hated. This can only be due to the fact that the unborn Esau was guilty of sin. That God's love for Jacob was explicitly merciful (Rom. 9:15) implies that Jacob was also guilty of sin.

Granted, Paul taught a difficult doctrine, but he would not have taught it if it were not true. This doctrine should serve to remind Christians how severe God's wrath is toward sin, how terrible sin itself is, and how great the sacrifice of Christ was. It should also remind believers that many acts of God's grace are overlooked as non-events or as deserved justice, such as the salvation of infants and fetuses. The mere birth of a child manifests God's longsuffering and gracious patience toward a sinful creature who deserved judgment even as he or she was being formed in the womb.

- B. Totality of Being — Every part of man's being is depraved: his body, flesh, heart and mind are all impure. This does not mean that man is as sinful as he can possibly be (utterly depraved), but only that there is no part of his being which escapes corruption.**
 - 1. Heart — Man's heart, which is the seat of his passions and desires, akin to what Paul refers to as the "inner man," is corrupted by sin.**

“And the Lord said to Himself, ‘I will never again curse the ground on account of man, for the intent of man’s heart is evil from his youth’” (Gen. 8:21).

God will not curse the ground again on man’s account because God recognizes that man cannot be anything but evil, and God has chosen to show mercy. That God will refrain from such cursing perpetually implies that cursing is perpetually deserved, that is, that man’s heart (the heart of every person) remains perpetually evil.

“Who can say, ‘I have cleansed my heart, I am pure from my sin’?” (Prov. 20:9).

Since the implied answer to this question is, “no one,” the verse points to the sinfulness of every man’s heart. Even were one to argue that he had cleansed his heart in Christ, this would still presuppose a prior impurity or sinfulness of heart.

“Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives” (Eccl. 9:3).

All through man’s life, from beginning to end, man’s heart is not merely tainted by sin, but is full of evil and insanity.

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?” (Jer. 17:9).

Deceitful and desperately sick do not describe a sinless heart, but one steeped in corruption and depravity. Notice that this statement applies to mankind in general. In the context of this verse, Jeremiah added that only God can understand the heart, so that man in his natural condition does not recognize how sinful his heart really is.

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders” (Matt. 15:19).

These evil sins come from the heart of man. This list does not appear to have been intended to be exhaustive, but indicative of

sin in general. Since everyone sins, everyone must have a sinful heart.

“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts and fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness” (Mark 7:21-22).

[See the comments on Matt. 15:19 immediately above.]

“Since therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

The sprinkling here mentioned appears in context to be a sprinkling with Christ’s blood (see Heb. 9:13-14). Man’s heart needs to be cleansed by Christ’s blood because it possesses an “evil” conscience. Since evil is sinful, prior to being cleansed by Christ, man’s heart is sinful.

2. Mind — The human mind has been corrupted by sin and is a source of evil desires and rebellion against God. There is some overlap in New Testament writers’ uses of the words “mind” and “heart,” and related words.

“For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh . . . For the mind set on the flesh is death . . . because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so” (Rom. 8:5-7).

In the context of this passage, all who are not saved are “according to the flesh,” and have minds hostile toward God. Clearly, such minds are sinful. Since everyone was unsaved at some point, everyone had a sinful mind hostile toward God.

“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:3).

All Christians used to be, and all non-Christians still are, children of wrath who indulge the pleasures of the mind. The pleasures of the mind are characteristic of those on whom God's wrath sits, and therefore should be considered sinful. Since they are pleasures "of the mind," the mind is depraved.

"This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart" (Eph. 4:17-18).

The minds of the unconverted are full of futility, without understanding, and excluded from the life of God. Paul argued that hardness of unbelievers' hearts results in their ignorance. Hardness of heart must be understood as sinful, thus, so must the ignorance in the Gentiles which Paul said results from these hardened hearts. That Paul blamed the "ignorance that is in them" for their exclusion from the life of God affirms the sinfulness of this ignorance. Because this ignorance apparently resides in the minds of the unbelievers, their minds must be tainted by sin.

"That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:22-23).

This passage teaches Christians to cease being the kind of people they were, and to begin acting like the kind of people they have become. It mentions the "old self" and the unrenewed old "mind" as things to be put away. The "old self" is specifically corrupted by sin, and the fact that it is to go the same route as the unrenewed mind demonstrates that the minds of the unsaved are likewise corrupted by sin.

"And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Col. 1:21).

Christians are not alienated and hostile in mind toward God, and are not thereby engaged in evil deeds, only because they have been reconciled to God through Christ. Those who have not been reconciled are still alienated and hostile in mind toward God, and their sinful minds produce evil deeds. Since all people fall into the category of unreconciled until the point of their regeneration/conversion, all people initially have sinful minds.

“To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled” (Tit. 1:15).

The minds and consciences of the unbelieving are defiled, impure, that is, they are corrupted by sin.

“But when Christ appeared as a high priest . . . , He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:11-14).

The unconverted conscience has not been cleansed by the atonement of Christ, is in need of cleansing by Christ’s blood, and is therefore defiled and sinful. This means that every person has a sinful and defiled conscience prior to being saved by Christ.

3. **Body/Flesh — The flesh is not only corrupted prior to salvation, but also after it. It will not be fully redeemed until it is glorified in the resurrection of the last day. “Flesh” may identify man’s physical body and/or the non-corporeal but “fleshly” aspect of his nature.**

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin” (Rom. 6:6).

Paul referred to a Christian’s participation in Christ’s death as the death of the Christian’s body of sin. Here, he located sin in the human body itself. He also stated universally that before

dying with Christ man is in slavery to sin as a result of the sin which indwells his body.

“For while we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were aroused by the Law, were at work in the members of our body to bear fruit for death” (Rom. 7:5).

In this passage, being “in the flesh” equates to being unsaved. Those who are unsaved suffer from the fact that the sinful passions work in the members of their bodies to bear fruit for death. That is, sin corrupts the bodies of unbelievers and causes them to act sinfully.

“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh . . . But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which indwells me. I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members” (Rom. 7:18, 20-23).

Here Paul taught that sin indwells the flesh of believers. Upon regeneration a contrary, godly, spiritual force begins to struggle against the sin which indwells the believer’s flesh. No longer controlled entirely by the flesh, the believer struggles between right and wrong, instead of always choosing the wrong. In those who have not been saved, the flesh is alive and the spirit is dead. Since sin indwells and controls the only living part of their persons, sin totally dominates them. These have no godliness in their spirits with which to fight the sinful desires of their depraved bodies/flesh.

Some argue that Paul spoke of unsaved people here, but this reading does not alter implications for the present argument. If he spoke of the unsaved, it is still true that in their unsaved state their bodies are indwelt by sin.

“And those who are in the flesh cannot please God. However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you” (Rom. 8:8-9).

Following his explanation of the sin which indwells the human body/flesh, Paul continued by explaining that this sin so dominates the persons of unbelievers that they are rightly termed “in the flesh.” Those who fall into this category cannot please God. Obviously, the condition of their flesh must be sinful if being “in the flesh” actually prevents them from pleasing God. Those who are regenerate, however, have a new identity in Christ, a living spirit that rejoices in the truth, and God’s promise of the future redemption of their sin-indwelt bodies. These are “in the Spirit.” All unregenerate and regenerate people have bodies indwelt by sin, therefore, the natural state of fallen man is one in which his flesh is corrupted by sin.

“We ourselves, having obtained the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23).

While Christians have regenerate, redeemed, God-loving spirits, they also retain corrupted, sinful bodies. Paul teaches that a Christian’s continuing hope is for the redemption of his body. If all Christians have corrupted bodies even after they believe the gospel, then they must have had sin-indwelt bodies prior to their conversions. Since the Christian’s prior unregenerate state is typical of all unsaved people, all men have bodies corrupted by sin.

“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please . . . Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousings, and things like these” (Gal. 5:17,19-21).

In Christians, such as the Galatians to whom Paul wrote, the flesh is indwelt by sin and by the spirit by God. Sinful deeds, such as those included in the list in this text, originate in the sin which indwells the flesh. Thus, Paul termed them “deeds of the flesh.” Those who are not saved do not have spirits indwelt by God, but do have bodies indwelt by sin.

“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” (Eph. 2:3).

All Christians used to be, and all non-Christians still are, children of wrath who live in the lusts of their flesh, and indulge the pleasures of the flesh. These lusts and pleasures of the flesh are characteristic of those toward whom God is wrathful, and are sinful. This indicates that unregenerate man’s flesh is corrupted by sin.

“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:22).

Just as a person’s heart can only be clean through the atonement of Christ, so his body must be washed clean from impurity. Since all who see the Father must get to him through the Son, all are in need of cleansing, and therefore all are sinful before such cleansing. One place in which this sinfulness resides is the body, demonstrating that the body is corrupted by sin.

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members?” (Jas. 4:1).

Here, sinful pleasures involve the members of one’s body in sin. In this instance, there is some overlap between the “heart” as the seat of pleasures and the body in which these pleasures are active. Christians and unbelievers engage in this sinful use of their bodies.

“Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

Paul, James and Peter all argued that the lusts of a Christian’s flesh wage war against his soul/spirit. They all concur that sin is on the side of the flesh/body, even in believers, demonstrating their belief that every person’s body has been corrupted by sin.

4. Spirit/Soul — There is significant overlap between the spirit/soul on the one hand, and the heart, mind, and non-corporeal aspects of the

body/flesh on the other hand. Man in his natural state is spiritually dead, his spirit/soul being slain and corrupted by sin.

“And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you” (Rom. 8:10-11).

Only those whom Christ indwells have “living” spirits because a living spirit is dependent upon righteousness. Those whom Christ does not indwell lack the requisite righteousness to give their spirits life. In this passage, the contrary element to righteousness is sin, which kills the bodies even of believers. Thus, those who lack righteousness (those who lack Christ) have sin instead, and this sin causes the deaths of their spirits. Man’s natural fallen state, therefore, is one in which sin corrupts and kills the spirit.