

# THE DOCTRINE OF TOTAL DEPRAVITY

by

Harold W. Hoehner

**1A. Definition:** unmeritoriousness of man in the sight of God

**2A. Explanation of the doctrine**

**1B. Negatively: It does not mean:**

- 1C. Man has exhibited his depravity as thoroughly as he could
- 2C. Man indulges in every form of sin
- 3C. Man never performs actions that are good in the sight of men
- 4C. Man has no consciousness of what God would like. Man has a conscience

**2B. Positively: It means:**

- 1C. Corruption extends to every part of man's nature, including all the faculties of his being
- 2C. Nothing in man that can commend him to a righteous God for salvation

**3B. Illustration:**

A communist who comes to the U.S.A. may seek citizenship. While he is trying to overthrow the government, we may find him with the qualities of courage and fidelity to his comrades. He may do what the U.S. government requires but not because he loves this country but because of obedience to the Communist party so that he can continue to work in the country in order to overthrow it. Therefore, one sees his obedience to those in authority, honesty within the party ranks, discipline in his work, and ambition to accomplish the goals of the party. But he has nothing to recommend him as a citizen of the U.S.A. First, he must give up his rebellion. Second, he must give allegiance to our government. Third, he must plead for mercy.

So also man may follow the laws of society, do good for society, work hard for our country and mankind, but this does not help his position before God. Therefore, he must give up the rebellion--repent--change his mind about Christ.

**3A. Conclusion**

Total depravity is the entire absence of holiness, not the intensity of sin. A totally depraved man is not as bad as he can be, but he has no holiness, that is, nothing to commend himself to God.