



"The world is indeed full of peril, and in it there are many dark places; but still there is much that is fair, and though in all lands love is now mingled with grief, it grows perhaps the greater."

—J.R.R. Tolkien

14-Aug-20

Has Humanity Reached Total Depravity? (Part Three)

Remember the old Lay's Potato Chips commercials on American television with the slogan, "Betcha can't eat just one"? We could use a similar slogan to describe human [sin](#): "Betcha can't commit just one!" No one has sinned just once. The record of most people's sins reads like the rap sheet of a seasoned criminal! Even converted Christians sin more than just now and then because we are far from the image of our perfect Savior, [Jesus Christ](#).

Out of ignorance, people live completely unaware of many of their sins. Millions blithely [keep Sunday](#) to the Lord, never taught that He sanctified only the seventh day—not the first. Many Christians proudly wear crosses and venerate saints and images, having been raised to do so yet never checking to see what [God](#) says about such things. People also fail to do good when they should ([James 4:17](#)), committing what are called "sins of omission."

Because human nature constantly justifies itself and casts itself in the best light possible, human beings have a blindness toward the sinfulness of their own actions. They justify hatred, saying the other person is worse. They justify sexual immorality by calling it "love." They justify thefts because others have more. They justify lies so they do not [offend](#) or hurt others. All these are still sins, no matter how people rationalize them.

Sometimes, while unable to name the specific sin, we know that our attitudes have been wrong. We realize that our approach has contributed to make bad situations worse. We recognize that we have been selfish about certain matters. These are all sinful, missing the high standard of godliness.

So, we find we must go before God again and again to seek His forgiveness for being human, carnal, and weak. When we examine ourselves honestly, we realize that, as the Bible testifies repeatedly about humanity, we, like the apostle Paul in [Romans 7:14](#), are "carnal, sold under sin." We must go before the throne of grace to ask for forgiveness and mercy for being our carnal selves!

Reformed Protestants—often called Calvinists—teach a Doctrine of Total Depravity. This doctrine has a long history, deriving from Augustine's notion of Original [Sin](#). It posits that all humanity is sinful, possessing no [goodness](#) that can satisfy [God](#). This teaching means that, while human nature is not completely depraved, human nature is totally *affected* by depravity so that sin taints even the good that people do.

Since Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil ([Genesis 3:1-7](#)), humans, their descendants, have been a mixture of good and evil. But like wine injected with poison, the good in people is corrupted by evil. Even such good things as human love and acts of altruism—thoughtful devotion to the welfare of others—are ultimately driven by selfishness, ego, pride, [covetousness](#), or some other sinful motive. This is the gist of the Protestant Doctrine of Total Depravity.

We can agree that human nature is a mixture of good and evil, and that humans are inclined toward selfishness, even from an early age. We know that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" ([Romans 3:23](#)). Theologically, then, human beings are indeed *depraved*, that is, "marked by corruption and evil." Men and women are sinful and in need of a Savior.

But has man's sinfulness reached its nadir, as in the [days of Noah](#)? In His Olivet Prophecy, Jesus foretells, "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" ([Matthew 24:37](#); see [Luke 17:26](#)). While Jesus describes pre-Flood people as carelessly ignorant and unprepared for the Flood, the most recognizable feature of Noah's time is its horrible violence and evil, mentioned in [Genesis 6:5](#), 12-13. Their evil and corruption forced God's hand to judge them so harshly. He says in [Genesis 6:13](#): "The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth."

[Revelation 14:17-20](#) describes the moment God moves in judgment against the sins of mankind before Christ's return:

Then another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle. And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the [wrath of God](#). And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.

Has humanity reached this point? The Day of the Lord, which this passage depicts, has not yet begun, but it feels dangerously close. Humans, being sinful from their youth, teeter on a knife's edge, one misstep away from plunging into the abyss of evil. Recent outbreaks of violence, looting, vandalism, and revolution in our cities have sharply reminded us how thin the veneer of civilization lies over our society. What we thought to be a remote possibility is now a continuing reality in Minneapolis, New York, Seattle, Portland, Oakland, and many other American cities.

We wait only for God to move events toward His own ends, and perhaps what we witness happening across America and in other parts of the Western world are early steps of His end-time agenda. He

may intervene in [this world](#) and unleash the Day of the Lord whenever He wills, and when He does, He will be justified in doing so. No human being could ever come before Him and say that he or she was innocent.

God has a plan. He is working things out in His own time, and He times everything perfectly. He does not have to wait until everybody is clubbing or stabbing his neighbor because sin is not just violence. It does not always manifest as murder, rape, and robbery. In whatever form it takes, sin is always destructive. Sin always ends in death ([Romans 6:23](#)).

So, yes, humanity is full of wickedness, and as human sins mount ever higher, the days of "this present evil age" ([Galatians 1:4](#)) are numbered. It is a sobering and difficult thought to accept. But God has called us out of this age, out of the sinful world, giving us the means through His Son to do good and ultimately *be* good. Though we will never be altogether good in this life, by the power of His Spirit and the knowledge of God, we can overcome the evil in our nature and "learn to do good" ([Isaiah 1:17](#)), growing in godly character.

God in us by His Spirit accounts for any real good that we may do. We can take baby steps in learning to do good because He has intervened in our lives and opened a relationship for us with His Son. Otherwise, we would be just like everyone else—altogether evil continually. For that, we need to thank Him continually.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

World News Highlights

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=KzvdGCT>

Life News 07-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=muWkp06>

Breitbart 28-Jul-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=jMxFaXB>

Bloomberg/Quint 11-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=WJoh2CZ>

The Week 12-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=zIJq5pN>

The New York Post 11-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=BMDG5ec>

The New York Post 10-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=rPibqP8>

Financial Post 10-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=gUKIYuC>

DNYUZ 11-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=2zXPJRC>

Associated Press 14-Aug-20

<https://c.cgg.org/index.cfm/r/?s=Zle7mJw>

CNBC 12-Aug-20

New Transcripts

[1156c: Who Owns Water?](#)

Given by Martin G. Collins on 04-May-13

[1157c: Is Education the Answer? \(Part 2\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 11-May-13

[1537-AM: Wilderness Wanderings \(Part One\)](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 09-Apr-20

[1547AM: Wilderness Wanderings \(Part Three\) - Handpicked Children](#)

Given by John W. Ritenbaugh on 31-May-20

[1548B: God's Love and Teachings for His Children](#)

Given by Kim Myers on 06-Jun-20

[1557c: Everything Is Politics](#)

Given by Richard T. Ritenbaugh on 08-Aug-20

Prayer Requests

New prayer request updates have been posted for the following people:

[Mark Harper](#)

[Lawrence Holley](#)

[Jennifer Nuding Underwood](#)

[John Reiss](#)

[Musonda Sakala](#)

[Pat Williams](#)

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

From the Archives: Featured Article

'As It Was In the Days of Noah'

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

What did Jesus mean when He said the end time would be like the days of Noah? Did He mean that the last days would be violent and corrupt, or that the last days would come suddenly on an unsuspecting world? Amazingly, the waning years of this century fulfill both.

Featured Audio Schedule

Friday Night Bible Study

The next Bible Study will be **Hebrews (Part 4)**, given by **John W. Ritenbaugh** on **Friday 14-Aug-20**. The Bible Study will be continuously available from **6:00 pm Friday** until **12:00 pm Saturday (EST)**.

If you would like to subscribe to the C.G.G. Weekly newsletter, please visit our [Email Subscriptions page](#).
