Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ,

If I described the man who shot and killed 51 people in the Christchurch Mosque shootings as totally depraved, I think that most people would agree. They would be happy to put him in the totally depraved category with other violent criminals and tyrants like Adolf Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Pol Pot.

But what about Jane at the checkout at Countdown, or Bob in the timber yard at Mitre-10, or your unbelieving neighbour? Are they totally depraved too? I mean many unbelievers are kind and helpful. So surely they are not totally depraved?

Well, that depends, of course, on what we mean by totally depraved. The term is typically used to describe people who do *really* bad things all of the time. But that is not what the doctrine of Total Depravity means. So what we want to do this afternoon is to see *how* the Bible teaches this doctrine and *what* this doctrine means. For only then will we be ready to understand the sweetness of the Bible’s solution to this problem. And we do this to understand our own amazing situation as believers but also the real spiritual condition of our unbelieving friends and neighbours. For if we do not understand how desperate their condition is then we just *won’t tell them* what they need to know or we won’t know *what to tell them*.

So what we want to see today is that **we must understand our corrupt condition before we will seek the sweetness of salvation**. And they will be the two major points of our sermon – our **Corrupt Condition** and then our **Sweet Salvation**.

1. So we begin with our **corrupt condition**.
   1. And we use the word ‘**corrupt’** very deliberately because to corrupt is to change something from good to bad. I am sure you boys and girls will remember a time when you saw Mum bring some lovely juicy apples back from the supermarket but a couple of days later when you picked one up it was soft and bruised and yucky. Well, that fruit was corrupt; it *was* good but now it is bad. And in the same way our original condition as human beings was very good. And it is important that we understand this because this is one of the first things that the Bible wants us to see. So let’s read **Genesis 1:26-31**.
      1. So, it is the sixth day of creation. Everything else has already been created by God. And, at the end of each of the six days, God described what He had made as good. But now He comes to the last work of creation; the creation of man. And we see that God made man, male and female, in His image. So what does this mean?
         1. Well, think about the word “**image**.” Boys and girls, have you ever leaned over a still, clear, pool of water and caught sight of your reflection? An exact copy of yourself looks back at you. If you wink your eye or make faces at the reflection you get an exact imitation of your actions don’t you. But is that reflection really you? No. It is not. It is only an image of you. Well, in a sense that helps us to understand what it means to be made in the image of God. It signifies that man was created as a reflection of God; if you look at man, you see something of God. Now, remember that God is a Spirit so He does not have a body like we do. So our being the image of God does not mean we look like Him; it means that we are His spiritual likeness.
         2. And so just as God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons who live in fellowship together, who communicate with each other, and who have roles or tasks within the godhead, our being in the image of God means that we were created to live in relationships, and given the ability to communicate with others, and given roles and tasks to perform. This is why God made Adam *and Eve*. So being relational is part of what it means to be made in the image of God.
         3. **Ephesians 4:24** reveals that Adam and Eve were “*created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness*.”
            1. So they **knew** God without the distraction of sin. They **loved** Him freely and perfectly. The decision to eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil was not the first decision that they made. Before then, every moment of every day Adam and Eve had decided to love God, purely and perfectly. They also **lived** with God in a fellowship which would have gone on into eternity if it had not been broken by their decision to sin. And every day, Adam and Eve could rejoice in the abilities of their bodies and their minds. They **worked** in the garden, ruling over the earth just as God rules over all creation. And their work was done, perfectly, and for **God’s praise and glory**.
         4. And all of this is why we see in v31 that having made human beings, God “*saw all that He had made, and it was very good*.” And it was *very* good because now God’s image-bearers were in creation. So this was our original condition as human beings. Adam and Eve were “*very good*.”
   2. Sadly though, **this goodness did not last long**. And we see this in **Genesis 3:1-19**. God had told Adam that he could eat the fruit of every tree in the garden except for the fruit of the Tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But look what happened (read).

Boys and girls, I spoke a while ago about the reflection of yourself that you can see in a still pond; the perfect mirror image. Well, what happens when you throw a rock into that pond? The water is violently shaken and even the mud on the bottom of the pool is stirred up to the point that you can not see a reflection at all. After a while, you might be able to see a murky sort of shape start to come back, but it is nothing like that perfect reflection you saw before the stone fell. Well, this is what sin did to man as the image of God. God’s reflection in man was ruined and barely recognizable.

* + 1. Think about what Adam and Eve did after they ate the fruit:
       1. They became aware of their nakedness and they were **ashamed** so they tried to hide their nakedness with leaves.
       2. They also hid from God when they heard Him walking in the garden. There was no apology or confession; just hiding. They were **scared** of God.
       3. And then, after God called them out, they **blamed** someone else for their sins.
       4. And then when God explained the consequences of Adam and Eve’s sin, He told them that there would be **dysfunction** in their relationship as husband and wife. And this would also be the case also in every other relationship .
       5. And their **work** would not be perfect rule like God’s but sweaty, repetitive, hard labour.
       6. And as God had warned Adam, their lives would now end with **death**.
       7. And what all of this adds up to is spiritual and physical death, a corrupt condition, total depravity. And this is not to say that everything Adam and Eve did was as utterly as bad as it could be all the time. What it means is that every aspect of Adam and Eve’s nature as human beings was now infected with sin. As our confession article puts it, their “whole nature” was corrupted. They had lost the fullness and purity of the excellent gifts they had received from God. They were no longer naturally God *pleasers*, now their natural condition was God *haters*.
          1. And so, in the very next chapter, one of their sons, **Cain**, murders his brother, Abel.
          2. And just two chapters along we read that “*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*.” And so He destroyed the world with the Flood, only saving Noah and his family.
          3. The Book of **Judges** is about God’s special OT people – Israel. And we keep reading that “*every man did what was right in his own eyes*.” And if you read Judges, what they did was extremely wicked!
          4. **Isaiah 53:6** says, “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way*.”
          5. **Romans 5:10** describes man in his natural condition as an *enemy* of God. **Romans 8:7** says that we are “*hostile to God*.” **Ephesians 2:1** says we are “*dead in trespasses and sins*.” And **Ezekiel 37** puts this into a vivid picture as it describes fallen man as like a valley of dry bones.
    2. And this brings us to our third and last passage, which is **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**. And we turn here because if you have been following along you will have noticed that I have already connected the corrupt condition of Adam and Eve to everyone born since them by talking about their son and Israel and “fallen humanity” and “we,” which includes all of us. Why? We did not eat the fruit from the tree. We did not disobey God’s command in the Garden of Eden. So why do we inherit their guilt? Why do we not begin life very good? Why are all human beings, apart from of the saving work of Christ, totally depraved? Well, let’s read these two verses.
       1. So v21 explains that death came by a man and v22 tells us that that man was Adam. And v22 tells us that “***all die***.” And in those two words you have the bare-faced reality of the doctrine of total depravity. Adam and Eve were created to *live*, physically and spiritually; death was not a part of the original creation. It would come, warned God, only if they disobeyed His command. And by death was meant not only *physical* death but *spiritual* death. And death and sin would come not only to Adam and Even but to every human being.
       2. And this is so because Adam was created as the **representative of all humanity**. What Adam did he did on behalf of all humanity.
          1. **Romans 5** speaks about this also; there we read that “*sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men* … *Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men … for as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners*.” So Adam’s sin brought sin and death to all humanity.
          2. Let me illustrate it this way: Very soon the Rugby World Cup will begin. And it could be that in one important game team A is behind by one point and time is up on the clock and they get a penalty kick. And penalty kicks are worth three points. So **if the kick goes over**, does just the kicker become the winner or his whole team? The whole team does because the kicker represents the whole team. And likewise, if he misses the kick, the rest of team cannot complain and say well we did not miss the kick; we shouldn’t have to be losers!! No, he represents the whole team. If he misses, they are all losers. And in a similar way, what Adam did he did *representing humanity*.
          3. When you boys and girls **learn the alphabet**, you are taught that A is for apple, and B is for ball, etc. Well, the children of believers in America, way back in the 1700s, learned the alphabet with the help of the **New-England primer**. Look it up on Google sometime. They learned F by saying, The Fool is whipt at school. ☺ But this is how they learned A – In Adam’s Fall, we sinned all. So you were getting theology and spelling all in one! So even though you and I did not eat the fruit in the garden, because of our connection with Adam, we share in his guilt and corruption.
    3. So coming back to what I said in the sermon introduction: Bob at Mitre-10, and Jane at Countdown, and Tom and Sally over your garden fence, regardless of how friendly and caring and polite and even morally conservative they are, if they are unbelievers, they are totally depraved; they have a corrupt condition; they are spiritually dead; they are hostile enemies of God. And if that does not change, they will spend eternity in hell.

1. But we have not finished with this 1 Corinthians 15 text, have we. It doesn’t *just* tell us that death came to all, from Adam. It also says that “*by a man came also the resurrection from the dead*,” and “*in Christ shall all be made alive*.” And that is why we must conclude with what the Bible reveals about **our sweet salvation**.
   1. A couple of times in this sermon I have said that **every human being born** since Adam and Eve has inherited their corrupt condition. And that is because human beings are the product of a sinful Father *and* a sinful mother. But there was one human being born who did not have a sinful father. And that human being was? The Lord Jesus. He had a sinful mother, Mary, but because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, the line of corruption was interrupted.
      1. And so, He did not have a corrupt condition; He was not totally *or even partially* depraved. He was without sin, we read in **Hebrews 4:14**, which means not only that He never broke any of God’s commandments but also that He perfectly kept all of God’s commandments.
      2. So while Adam and Eve were created in the image of God, **Hebrews 1:3** tells us that the Lord Jesus is the “*exact imprint (or image) of [God’s] nature*.” While Adam and Eve were created able to fall, as God, the Lord Jesus could not fall. He was truly tempted like Adam and Eve were, and like you and I are, but He *could* not and *would* not choose sin. Unlike fallen humanity, His spiritual nature was alive, not dead; His condition was good, not corrupt.
   2. Now, you might be thinking to yourself, but **didn’t Jesus die just like we die**? And the answer is Yes, He certainly did. But we die because that is what our sin deserves; He died because He took our sins upon Himself. And that is the exact point that is being explored here in **1 Corinthians 15:21-22**.
      1. The major point of this chapter is the resurrection of Jesus. Some in Corinth were saying that there is no resurrection from death. So Paul responded by saying that there is resurrection – Jesus rose and more than 500 people saw Him after He rose. And His resurrection is the absolute essence of the gospel. And this is because cough medicine or hay fever tablets are no use to dead people; the only thing that can benefit dead people is? Resurrection.
      2. And what have we seen about the condition of all humanity post Fall? We are *corrupt*, we are *totally depraved*, we are *dead* in our sins and we will die. So what do we need? We need spiritual and physical resurrection.
      3. And that is **the message of the gospel** – we are dead but resurrectable; we can be made alive! Jesus came that we might have eternal? Life! Just as we are all connected with Adam in sin and death, by faith we can be connected to the resurrection of Jesus! If we believe that God raised His Son from death, we move from death to life; we are no longer totally depraved but now able to please God with our obedience; we are no longer enemies of God but His adopted children; **Colossians 1:13** says we are “*delivered … from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of His beloved Son*.”

* So if you are a believer, do you see what this means for you? You were a corrupt enemy of God who was dead in sin. But **Ephesians 2:5** says, God “*made [you] alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved*.” What you deserved was death but what you have received is life – spiritual life now and eternal life in heaven. Are you grateful? And is your gratitude evident in how you speak and think and behave?
  + The consistent message of the Epistles is you have been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, **therefore**… do not lie, or be divisive, or unforgiving, or steal, or hate, or disobey, or selfish, or sexually impure… instead, love others, be patient, tell the truth, forgive, be wise, make good use of your time, build others up, pursue sexual purity…
* But if you are here today and you have not yet believed in Jesus, though you might see yourself as a good and moral person, you need to know that you will be condemned to hell if you do not repent and believe in the Lord Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins.
  + For anything we do to be good in God’s eyes it must arise out of thankfulness for salvation in Christ and be done to honour God. So all of your kind deeds will count for nothing on Judgment Day unless you have believed in Jesus. Come to Jesus today! Put your trust in Him and His work on the cross for you today!
* And brothers and sisters, I hope you now understand the corrupt condition of your unbelieving family members and friends and neighbours and work mates. They will not seek the sweetness of salvation in Jesus unless they hear that they are dead in sin and destined for hell without Him. Faith in Jesus comes through hearing the gospel, Romans 10:17 says. And that does not man that all who hear will believe, but if they do not hear, they cannot believe. So tell them what you have heard today. Tell them about their corrupt condition and the sweetness of salvation in Jesus Christ. Amen.