

#### Article 4 – Original Sin and Total Depravity

*“We believe that the entire human family are dead in trespasses and sins by reason of the first transgression and are utterly unable to recover themselves from their fallen condition.”*

This fourth Article of Faith affirms that man by nature is spiritually dead concerning things pertaining to God. This state of spiritual death is because of our relation to the first man Adam who, with his wife Eve, sinned in the Garden of Eden. Our own sins show ourselves to be in the same state of death by nature. This article thus affirms the important biblical doctrines of Original Sin and Total Depravity.

The Doctrine of Original Sin relates to the impact of the first transgression upon all of us as a result of our parents Adam and Eve in disobeying God’s commandment and eating of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Gen 2:17; 3:6. We are sinners from conception because of our relation to Adam as our forefather, who transmitted this sinful nature to everyone who is a descendent of his (the entire human family). Sin corrupts every aspect of human existence, from our own thoughts and emotions to our relationships with one another and with God.

To be dead in trespasses and sins refers to this spiritual state of man by nature before God. Just as physical death is the separation of the body from the soul, spiritual death is the separation of the soul and spirit from God. When Adam and Eve committed the first sin, they were separated from God. This same state of separation has been passed down to the entire human family. *“Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* Romans 5:12.

The Doctrine of Total Depravity relates to this spiritual state of death. Man by nature is wholly depraved, which means that he has no desire for or understanding of spiritual things. In this state of death, natural man has no ability or will to recover himself from this fallen condition, as all of his thoughts, motivations and actions are evil. *“And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* Genesis 6:5.

Total depravity does not mean that a natural man will act as wickedly as humanly possible. External societal pressures, his own self-interest, and even God’s constraints and overriding providence may serve to limit the extent to which he carries out wicked actions. Nonetheless, man by nature is wholly corrupt, and unable and unwilling to do anything good, acceptable or pleasing to God. *“The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”* Psalms 14:2-3.

It took a great Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to die in our place to satisfy the wrath of God. Having been reconciled by the death of the cross, God now sends the Holy Spirit to sovereignly give spiritual life to all of His Elect. A man will love God and seek spiritual things only after he has been given spiritual life by God. If a man has faith in Jesus Christ, this is an evidence, not the cause, of him having been given spiritual life.