

Doctrine 5:

Distorted image

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

Big ideas

- **Everything was created good – human beings and creation**
- **Our nature is to disobey God, which cuts us off from the source of life**
- **God longs for us to love him, but love must be freely given on our part**

“*As it is written: There is no-one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God*”

(Romans 3:10–11).

In creating us with the ability to love, God has also given us the freedom not to love. This is the nature of free will – and real love. Every choice we make in life boils down to a question of love – love for God, love for others and love for ourselves.

The Bible says God created people in his image and that in the beginning, everything was good. We were made to love God and others. People were like God in their hearts, and they knew him.

“*Then God said, ‘Let us make human beings in our image, in our likeness’. God saw all that he had made, and it was very good*” (Genesis 1:26, 31).

But people turned away from God. They chose to ignore God and fell into more and more sin – not loving God and others. Now, all human beings have the tendency to stuff things up in our relationships with people, with God and the world. Sadly, we see the evidence of this all around us in broken relationships, bullying, addictions, physical and sexual violence, wars, theft and pollution of the Earth.

This problem in humanity is called total depravity. It is depraved – it is broken and stained. It is total because it affects every part of people. As God is love and holy, God cannot ignore humanity’s sin. God is against everything which spoils and hurts people. His opposition to sin and injustice is called his wrath or anger.

We see Jesus’ anger or wrath at those who damage or hurt children:

“*If you harm one of these little ones, better for you that a millstone be draped around your neck and you be dropped into the depths of the sea*” (Luke 17:2).

We see Jesus’ anger or wrath towards self-righteous religious leaders when he calls them “blind guides” (Matthew 23:16), “hypocrites” (Luke 13:15) and “fools” (Matthew 23:17).

If God was not angry with sin, God would not be loving. It would suggest that God did not care about sin and the hurt that we cause in the world.



Putting belief into practice

I will make the values of the Kingdom of God and not the values of the world the standard of my life.

I will uphold Christian integrity in every area of my life, allowing nothing in thought, word or deed that is unworthy, unclean, untrue, profane, dishonest or immoral.

I will remain Christian ideals in all my relationships with others: my family and neighbours, my colleagues and fellow salvationist, those to whom and for whom I am responsible, and the wider community.

Our culture esteems the rich, successful and powerful and marginalises the most vulnerable – people who are poor, homeless, unemployed, displaced, and those with mental health issues. The Christian faith and the work of The Salvation Army is counter-cultural and has always taken special care of the socially vulnerable and marginalised.

The world or the culture around us values wealth, careers, pleasure and materialism – the buying and consumption of stuff. The Kingdom of God values relationships, community, caring for the world and one another.

Following Christ will mean learning to live with and deal with temptation to follow the values of the world. When faced with a decision or action, we can look to God, his word and your Christian brothers and sisters for wisdom and encouragement.

Discuss

- What are the values of the world?
- How are they different from the values of the Kingdom of God?
- How do the values of the world tempt you in life?