

Are We Really That Bad?

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Text: Ephesians 2:1-3

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Introduction: Open your Bible to the book **Ephesians 2:1-3**. The title of this evening's message is "Are We Really That Bad?".

Look at **Ephesians 2:1-3**, "And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

This passage is not describing man's view of himself, but God's view of man.

Introduction:

Why is a biblical view of man and a biblical view of sin so important? We must simply go to verse 4 to find out. You cannot see the awesomeness of what God has done for you until you see the misery of your condition.

A. Man's greatest problem is that he cannot see the seriousness of his condition. Sure he knows he has sinned, but he cannot see that heinousness and treachery of sin.

John Bunyan said, "Sin is the dare of God's justice, the rape of His mercy, the jeer of His patience, the slight of His power, and the contempt of His love".

This is why God gave us the Law.

B. The Law helps us see the **awfulness** of sin. No one wants to face the awfulness of sin. Remember that "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness" (**Proverbs 20:6**).

The Law is a mirror to show us how great our sin is, so that we can see how great God's grace is! The Law is "our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (**Galatians 3:24**). The Law shows us the mountain of sin that is higher than the heavens. But remember **Romans 5:20**, "Moreover the law entered, that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."

What is the God's view of man?

I. Notice the **Reality** of man's condition before God: Man is **dead** in sin. Before God, man, though created good has now fallen and is dead in trespasses and sins. What does it mean to be "dead"?

A. **Explanation** of the term "dead". The word "dead" means to have no power or ability and to be completely "senseless". A dead person has no ability to do anything concerning this world. He cannot make money. He cannot have a family. He cannot write a book. He is dead. He has no senses. He cannot see, hear, smell, or feel anything. In the same way, the natural man is dead toward God because of his sins.

He is **senseless** when it comes to sensing the need to please God.

- He does not **feel** the weight of his sin. He does not see the beauty of God. He is not compelled at all to adore Him. He does not see the need to serve Him. He is spiritually dead.
- He does not sense the atrocity of his sin. He is blind and dead to the need to live for God. Instead he lives completely for himself, breaking God's Law, trespassing the purpose for which God created him.

We were originally created to please God. The Lord has "created all things, and for [HIS] pleasure they are and were created" (**Revelation 4:11**). Man is created to be God-centered, but instead is born "dead in trespasses and sins".

Man has become totally self-centered. **Isaiah 53:6**, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way".

B. **Illustration / Cross Reference.** The Bible interprets the Bible **Colossians 2:13** gives the same principle, but gives an **illustration**. Paul says, "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses".

In other words to be "dead in sin" is to be hardened toward God. It is to be uncircumcised in your flesh. It is to have a covering over any sensitivity to God.

C. **Application:** If left to himself, man will never come to God. This is what Paul states in **Romans 3:10-12**, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11 There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. 12 They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."

My brother and sister in Christ, this is what you *were* before Christ. Do you see the grace and mercy of God. You would not have come to Him in 10,000 years of sermons if He had not come to you first.

1 John 4:19, "We love him, because he first loved us".

John 6:37, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."

John 6:44, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:65, "no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father."

What a sad reality! Man is DEAD to God. He has no sense at all that he should worship Him. Instead He is very content to live His live totally centered around self. This is the reality of who man really is.

II. Notice secondly, the **Reason** of man's condition: man is dead in **trespasses** and **sins**.

A. **Trespasses**: This word has the idea of breaking God's Law. It is "a deviation from living according to what has been revealed as the right way to live".¹

1 John 3:4 tells us "sin is the transgression of the law." Man is dead IN his trespasses. His constant trespasses confirm He is dead. Spiritually dead people are continually trespassing against God. We are called to perfectly love God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. The spiritually dead are content to trespass God's law continually.

B. **Sins**: The word "sins" here means to "miss the mark". Paul says in **Romans 3:22-23**, "for there is no difference: 23 For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God". Paul is saying there is no difference between Jew or Gentile, the religious or pagan person. All have missed God's mark.

When God came to man to show him the greatness of His love, and the awesomeness of His mercy and the dreadfulness of man's sin, He found man "dead in sin". He was continually missing God's mark of perfection. Even "the plowing of the wicked, is sin" (**Proverbs 21:4**). His "prayer shall be abomination" (**Proverbs 28:9**).

Most people are trying to be good. They have a conscience and they are aiming to do right. The problem is, no one ever has hit the mark. We all "come short" of the glory of God (**Romans 3:23**). Because there is no life of God in us, this all we can do. We have no ABILITY to please God or do right. We are "dead...in sins".

C. **When** do people fall into this death?

Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. **14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.**" How can death reign when there is no law?

Paul says of all men in **Romans 2:15**, All men "shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another". Before Moses there is no physical tablets of stone, but the law of God is written on the tablets of the hearts of all men.

¹Friberg, Timothy ; Friberg, Barbara ; Miller, Neva F.: *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Books, 2000 (Baker's Greek New Testament Library 4), S. 298

Man is created to love and serve God, but from birth, he only serves himself. **Psalm 58:3**, "The wicked are estranged [GO ASTRAY] from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies."

The Bible tells us that we are born spiritually dead! We call this "original sin". You may need to teach a child how to talk or how to walk or how to think correctly, but ***you do not need to teach him how to sin***. He knows it naturally. He has fallen into sin the moment he was conceived.

Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."

1 Corinthians 15:22, "For as in Adam **all die**."

Romans 3:23, "For **all** have sinned, and come short of the glory of God".

Mark 10:18, "Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God.*"

Now we come to another angle of what man is before God.

- III. Thirdly, notice the **Residence** of a person without Christ. This is ugly. His only home is this sin cursed earth. **Verse 2**, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world".

John tells us in **1 John 2:15-17**, "Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. 17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

As believers we've been delivered from living for **pleasures** [the lust of the flesh], **possessions** [the lust of the eyes], and **popularity** [the pride of life].

Man without Christ cannot help but to live for pleasures, possessions, and popularity as his god. He will never let go of those gods until he is released from that slavery by Jesus Christ.

Our citizenship is in heaven! We "set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (**Colossians 3:2**).

- IV. Fourthly, look at the **Ruler** of man without Christ. It is the devil. **Verse 2**, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince [RULER] of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience". This verse says that people without Christ are ruled by the wicked "the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience".

Jesus said to the Pharisees as He could say of all men: "Ye are of *your* father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (**John 8:44**). This dark ruler who roams the unseen spiritual realm is Satan. He is the one who brings evil influences to bear upon the world of men.

A. **Application:** if you are a believer, you have been delivered from Satan, but be careful! **1 Peter 5:8**, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour".

V. Finally, look at man's **Reprobation** without Christ. **Verse 3**, "Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

A. Man without Christ is will be absolutely **dominated by sin** and by his own way of living all the days of his life. He may live a debauched life or a religious life, but a life lived for self.

B. Man without Christ is **destined for wrath**—he will always meet with the wrath of God.

Conclusion: Next week, we will consider man's nature, and the fact that it takes the Holy Spirit to work on his heart to come to Christ. But for now, we must get the doctrine of man's depravity right, so that we can rightly see the Gospel. Look at **verse 4-10**, "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, ⁵ Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) ⁶ And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: ⁷ That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." **Romans 5:20**, "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds"!

You will never get a grasp on what redemption is until you understand man's depravity. Or to say it another way, if you want to see the heights of God's grace, you must first see how corrupt you really are.

Praise God for his everlasting love of depraved sinners that He draws by His grace!!