

Man's Dire Predicament

The Lostness of Man—part 1

Ephesians 2:1-3

March 13, 2022

Why does the bible insist that mankind must be saved? What is sin? Why do I keep doing the same selfish things? Why is the cross essential, a non-negotiable?

In spite of having a “positive mental attitude,” New Year’s resolutions, endless goal-setting routines, and multiple attempts to fix what is wrong with me, what’s going on in me that usually means I don’t seem to make much progress, no matter how hard I try? What’s wrong?

DAY 1: Human nature

1. What is mankind’s position on human nature? When one thinks about human nature, there are three credible positions on which people land.

a. Man is well.

2. Some maintain that human nature is not sick and certainly not dead. Past centuries may have witnessed starvation, disease, economic hardships and war, but as man evolves, these will become things of the past.

3. The modern progressive movement began with this naïve belief about human nature over one hundred years ago. It grew out of the evolutionary theory of Charles Darwin.

4. This view hit its zenith in the late 1890’s and came crashing down during WWI. Of course, disease, economic hardship, man’s inhumanity to man has not gone away. The 20th century was the most brutal century in the history of mankind, where 10’s of millions of people were killed *by their own governments!* Joseph Stalin’s forced famine killed an estimated 20 million people. Mao Tse Tung’s Cultural Revolution killed an estimated 50 million. That 70 million does not include Hitler’s holocaust of 6 million Jews or Cambodia’s 3 million in the killing fields of Pol Pot.

b. Man is not well. Sick.

5. There is something wrong with human nature. The situation is not desperate. We can try harder and do more. This belief about human nature is reflected in Rodney King’s question, “Why can’t we all just get along?” Why can’t we? There is something flawed in human nature. What seems like it should not be all that hard, somehow is.

c. Though man is made in the image of God, man is seriously and fatally flawed

Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins ...

*Ephesians 2:2...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work **in those who are disobedient.***

6. How would you describe human nature?

DAY 2: We are dead

1. Paul's view is the most realistic view of human nature. It is both the most wondrous and the most pessimistic view. We'll look at the pessimistic side. We will never truly understand who we are and why we do what we do unless we take a realistic view of our dark side.

*Ephesians 2:1 As for you, you were **dead** in your transgressions and sins ...*

2. Spiritually **dead**. It is a stunning picture. Sit a corpse up against the wall. That dead body is incapable of responding to any physical stimuli. The corpse cannot hear you talking to him about God. He feels no pain, and has no appetite for food. The same is true for natural man.

3. I am incapable of understanding and appreciating the things of God. I possess nothing within me that produces spiritual life or can please God. He describes the problem even more specifically. We are dead in "transgression and sins."

a. "Trespasses"

The word is used to describe people who have strayed off the safe, right road onto the back roads of trouble. People have the ability to very subtly or not so subtly walk away from God to do their own thing. It doesn't matter if you are religious or not. It's a matter of following Him. A person can be quite religious and not follow His path.

b. "Sins"

Sinners means we are missing the target, whether consciously on purpose or blindly missing the target while believing we are expert marksmen.

4. Deadness can be seen at three different levels. First deadness is seen in broad, cultural moral decay. Second, deadness is seen at the relational level—marriages that are in the process of decay, where once there was "life" being given to each other. Third, deadness is seen at the personal level--moral decay, spiritual blindness, indifference to the things of God.

5. When the bible says we are all sinners, it is not saying we are all axe murderers. Paul is describing a deadness that is true of every physically alive person.

6. It reminds me of a zombie. A zombie is a creature that has died but who nevertheless is still walking around. It is a gruesome sight. The body is dead and decaying, but still walking. This is the image Paul paints. In our independence from God and our opposition to God, we cut ourselves off from the very source of real life we need.

7. Though designed and built to reflect the wonder of God to the people around us, the life of Christ in us, that light is dead.

8. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 3: We are disobedient

*Ephesians 2:2...in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work **in those who are disobedient**.*

1. The central point of the story of Adam and Eve is to illustrate the reason for our predicament. God gave those two everything they needed for a perfect life. Instead of responding to God with simple trust and delight, with honor and love, they flatly disobeyed Him. As you read on in Genesis you see the terrible results in people's personal lives, relationships, and internationally.
2. Why are we disobedient? Paul describes several influences.

- **The World.**

Eph. 2:2b in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world

3. Whether we are aware of it or not every person is not just swayed, but controlled by the values of the world.

1 John 2:17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him.

- **The Devil.**

Eph. 2:2 in which you used to live when you followed the ... the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.

4. Satan's principal purpose is to cut you off from a vibrant relationship with God.
5. Jesus calls him "the father of lies." (John 8:44) "There are many ways to heaven.... Jesus Christ didn't have to die for you! You aren't a sinner. That's for someone like Hitler."
6. If Satan loses the battle to cut you off from Jesus Christ, he'll settle for torpedoing your personal life and relationships. Most of the time he is very subtle. "Ah, go ahead. Nobody cares.... Nobody will find out So what? You deserve a break"

- **The Flesh.**

Psalm 58:3 Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward, spreading lies.

7. Our "flesh" is that part of us that wants to be in control, and that is loathe to let God be in daily control or final control of my life. When push comes to shove, *I'll do what I want to do*.
8. A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog's nature.
9. When you think of the influence in our lives, the world, the flesh and the devil, is it any wonder that we disobey? Our dilemma is quite dire. We are disobedient *by nature* and incapable of changing our human nature because we are spiritually dead! I need outside help, and that help can only come from God.
10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: We are depraved.

*Ephesians 2:3 All of us also lived among them at one time, **gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts.** ...*

1. We live with the priority of pleasing ourselves first. We are at the mercy of our passions.
2. To be depraved does not mean that someone only does evil or what is obviously wicked. It does not mean that someone doesn't have the capacity to do good. It simply means that our nature is broken and bent away from living for God and the things of God. It is incapable of loving well, loving sacrificially, and finding our deepest needs met in God in such a way that leads us to want to pursue God, His love to love better than we do, to live for Him or honor Him.

Luke 6:33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that.

3. Jesus said lost sinners do good to each other, and to their children. It is "human" goodness.
4. When Paul was shipwrecked on the isle of Malta, many of the people were kind and helpful to Paul, but they still needed to hear the message of Christ. *Acts 28:1-2*

Luke 11:13 If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

5. Jesus distinguishes between human goodness and divine goodness.
6. When we think of depravity we usually think of illicit sex or horrible crimes, but depravity is not just what we think of as "heinous" sins. Sin itself is heinous.
7. The last time you had a fight with your spouse, the "cravings of our sinful nature" were driving it. What was the craving? An internal drive to be right, the drive to escape blame, the drive to get your point across, the drive to feel heard and the drive to be understood to name a few. Think of it from the opposite end. Was there an internal drive to listen? Was there an internal drive to take responsibility first, not blame? To understand, first?
- 8.. What depravity simply means is the drive within to satisfy me, in whatever context I find myself. My human nature "auto-pilot" centers around me. Even when I do something for someone else, my wife, kids, a friend, there is still a mostly hidden drive looking out for self-interest. That's depravity. Think of it from the other end. My auto-pilot should be other-centered.
9. In Ephesians 2, Paul had been speaking of the Gentiles, the non-religious. Here, he adds "we." "We all" refers to both Gentile and Jew, to the irreligious and the very religious. This is a profound admission for one who was steeped in religion, and was a proud leader, a Pharisee. The issue is not one of religious or irreligious. There is something that both share in common. There is something *in us* that gets us in trouble with God and with each other.

10. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: We are doomed

Eph. 2:3... Like the rest, we were by nature children of wrath.

1. Here, Paul ends with the horrible ending toward which every person is heading.
2. On one hand, when you hear the phrase, “the wrath of God” the notion usually associated with wrath is human wrath that is *unjust or unfair* wrath. The picture is someone out of control, blasting people away with invective, out of control. Nothing could be further than wrath expressed by God.
3. God’s wrath is that part of His love and justice that when all other redemptive means have failed to shake people out of their sin, self-centeredness, and evil, the only tool left is wrath.
4. A number of years ago a soccer team of young teenage girls was in Las Vegas for a national tournament. While several of them were walking down the street they were followed by a man in his car, who “wanted to show them something.” They were not only grossed out but terrified.
5. This man would not take no for an answer. They crossed the street so he would not follow them in his car. He merely made a U-turn and continued to stalk them.
6. The girls walked through the casino to meet their team. 50-year-old men were whistling at them. The men thought they were pretty sharp to whistle. They had no idea the evil they were perpetrating on the hearts of those two girls, and how repugnant they appeared to those girls.
7. Amazingly, if you asked any of these men if they were going to heaven some day, they’d undoubtedly say, “well, of course. My good outweighs my bad.”

They are dead. They are disobedient. They are depraved. They are doomed.

... and so are we without the wondrous grace of God!

Psalm 36:1-2 An oracle is within my heart concerning the sinfulness of the wicked: There is no fear of God before his eyes. For in his own eyes he flatters himself too much to detect or hate his sin.

2 Peter 3:9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

8. Jesus took our depravity and doom upon Himself!! At the price of His own life.
9. What strikes you from today’s devotional?