

been disobedient. “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not” (Ecc 7:20). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (I Jn 1:8).

2. YOU ARE DISOBEDIENT TO GOD’S COMMANDS - “children of disobedience” (V-2)

The essential, primary trouble you find yourself in is that you are a rebel against God. A “child” is someone who is under the authority of a parent. The child is expected to submit to and obey the parent. A rebellious child says in effect to the parent, “You can’t tell me what to do. You are not my boss. I’ll do as I please.” Man has been created by God and therefore is subject to God’s authority. You must acknowledge, “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life,” as Job once did (Job 33:4). Since God is your Creator, you belong to God and are accountable to Him. “For in Him we live, and move, and have our being...For we are also His offspring” (Acts 17:28). As a creature you are God’s property. He is your Owner and Master. He has the right, as a parent, to decide what is right and wrong for you. But like a rebellious child, you do not want to submit to God’s authority over you. You don’t like the idea of anyone, even God, being above you. This is one of the reasons the theory of evolution is so popular. It does away with God and God’s authority as Creator. God, in His Word and in capsule form by the Ten Commandments, has told you what you should and should not do. But you revolt against this. God says, “Thou shalt not” and you say, “Oh, yes, I will!” God demands, “Thou shalt,” and you refuse, “I will not!”

3. YOU ARE UNDER THE JUST WRATH OF GOD AS A SINNER - “children of wrath” (V-3)

Today people have a mistaken view of God. You frequently see bumper stickers with words like: “God is Love” or “Smile God Loves You.” The idea conveyed is that God is only a loving, compassionate, and kind Creator. The phrase “children of wrath” seems shocking in light of this. Interestingly enough, there are more references in the Bible to God’s anger, fury, and wrath than there are to His love and tenderness. Consider the Flood of Noah where an entire corrupt civilization was destroyed totally by God’s judgment. God’s awesome wrath wiped out the vile cities of Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone. Thousands of Israelites were killed off by God’s wrath so that their carcasses rotted in the desert. When Israel and Judah turned away from the Lord the Assyrians and Babylonians plundered and enslaved them as God’s righteous anger punished them for their sins. During the ministry of John the Baptist the message proclaimed was “Flee from the wrath to come” (Matt 3:7). The message of Christ was no different, “He that believeth not the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abideth on him” (Jn 3:36). The Apostle Paul declared “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom 1:18). In the book of Revelation you have people crying out, “Hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb” (Rev 6:16). Also you read of the “Lake of Fire” (Rev 20:14) into which the wicked are cast to endure eternal torments.

There is a divine displeasure and indignation toward all sin, therefore, God’s anger burns against the sinner. A holy God must punish those who are guilty of breaking His law, for He “will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex 34:7). He isn’t simply going to ignore your transgressions and forget

about them, for “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psa 7:11). And not only does the wrath of God “abide” upon sinners in this life, the Scriptures teach there is “the wrath to come” (I Thess 1:10). Unless God’s righteous indignation can be turned away before you die, you will be “punished with everlasting destruction” (II Thess 1:9) in the “lake of fire” (Rev 20:14). In what is commonly called “hell,” you will experience the fierce wrath of God forever. Hell is described in the most frightening terms as a “furnace of fire” (Matt 13:50) and a “place of torment” (Lk 16:28), where there is “no rest day nor night” (Rev 14:11). The Bible teaches that “every one of us shall give an account of himself to God” (Rom 14:12). God is not unjust, therefore, no sinner can claim he wasn’t treated fairly and doesn’t deserve to suffer the awful consequences of his sin. A holy God demands perfection and you are guilty of countless transgressions. One sin will damn your soul and during your lifetime you have heaped up an entire mountain of them. God’s promise of divine punishment will be fulfilled, “the wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psa 9:17). God is a God of wrath!

4. YOU MAY WISH TO DISMISS YOUR DEFILED AND SINFUL STATE - “Wherefore remember” (V-11)

In this same chapter of Ephesians, Paul provides a reminder of how people are “without Christ...strangers from the covenants of promise...without hope, and without God...” (Eph 2:11-12) as unregenerate sinful human beings. There is a tendency to forget these vital truths. A willingness to bury the facts as deeply as possible so that you can put them out of your mind.

Many years ago, while on a visit to England, a wealthy businessman was fascinated by a powerful microscope. Looking through its lens to study crystals and the petals of flowers, he was amazed at their beauty and detail. He decided to purchase a microscope and take it back home to America. He thoroughly enjoyed using it. But one day he examined the food he was planning to eat for dinner. Much to his dismay, he discovered that tiny living creatures were crawling in it. Since he was especially fond of this particular food, he wondered what to do. Finally, he concluded that there was only one way out of his dilemma. He would destroy the instrument that caused him to discover the disgusting fact about his food. So he smashed the microscope to pieces! And went on his merry way enjoying his delicious cuisine.

Many people do the same thing with the Word of God which, like a microscope, examines every faucet of your life. The Bible reveals things about you which you might not like to acknowledge. You may attempt to ignore the facts but it doesn’t change the reality of the situation confronting you.

Summary: You are a defiled and rebellious sinner in the eyes of God and under His just wrath.

II. YOU ARE A DEAD SINNER UNABLE TO HELP YOURSELF

1. YOU ARE IN A STATE OF DEADNESS - “Dead” (V-1,5)

One day Christ called a certain man to follow Him as His disciple. The man made an excuse, “I must first return home and bury my father.” That was a figure of speech

which meant waiting until his father died in order to receive the inheritance first. Jesus responded to this request in a startling way, “Follow Me; and let the dead bury their dead” (Jn 8:22). An interesting choice of words! Christ indicates that there are some LIVING DEAD PEOPLE! What He meant was, “Let the spiritually dead bury the physically dead.”

Paul speaks in the same manner here. That he is speaking of SPIRITUAL DEATH is clear from the fact that he also says “wherein ye walked” (V-2). On a physical level, you think of death in terms of a casket, a grave, a tombstone, a funeral home, flowers, and a sorrowful gathering of loved ones. There is another kind of death - spiritual death. “Your iniquities have SEPARATED between you and God” (Isa 59:2). You will recall God’s warning to Adam and Eve about the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. “For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely DIE” (Gen 2:17). God’s penalty for violation was death. There was a spiritual aspect to this death as well as a physical one. Spiritual death occurred immediately (“the day”) for Adam and Eve lost their fellowship with God. They were separated from God. Eventually, they died physically for the physical “time clock” for death started when they sinned. The sad outcome of this sin is that all the offspring of Adam and Eve inherit their fallen nature - “by nature the children of wrath” (V-3). You were BORN spiritually dead. David captures this thought in Psa 51:5, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me.” You transgress God’s Law and sin because you are spiritually dead by nature. You are not born in a state of innocence. You are born corrupt and evil. Your “heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jer 17:9).

Have you ever bitten into an apple and found a worm in it? You check the outside of the apple and it shows no marks or entry point for the worm. How did the worm get into the apple? Clearly he could not have burrowed in from the outside. No, it has been discovered that the worm can come from the inside. But how does he get in there? An insect lays an egg in the apple blossom before the apple is even formed. Later, the worm hatches in the heart of the apple. Then the worm eats his way out!

This is the way it is for you. Your heart is corrupted from the very beginning of your existence, therefore, you do wicked things. The “worm” of corruption got in before you came out of the womb! It is from your sinful heart that all sorts of wickedness proceeds.

2. YOU ARE TOTALLY DEPRAVED (V-2-3)

YOU ARE UNDER THE CONTROL AND MENTALITY OF THE WORLD - “ye walked according to the course of this world” (V-2)

The term “world” here is not referring to the created universe - i.e. sun, moon, stars, planets, mountains, rivers, oceans, etc. The Bible speaks of “this present EVIL WORLD” (Gal 1:4). The “world” here is a mentality, an outlook, a view of life which leaves out God (Eph 2:12). This is why God’s people are told, “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom 12:12). To be “of the world” is to be “outside” of Jesus Christ. Unsaved people are governed entirely by what other people think, say and do - i.e. the opinions of TV, radio, newspapers, music, etc. Moral standards are set by what society deems acceptable. Casual

sex is said to be O.K between two consenting adults. Little “white lies” are considered appropriate at times. Sharp business practices, which hurt people, are fine if you are successful in the corporate world. Using blasphemous words is said to be expressive. Your opinions, language, and desires are controlled by this evil world to a greater extent than you might imagine!

YOU ARE A SLAVE TO SATAN - “ye walked...according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience” (V-2)

You might say, “As a citizen of the modern world, you don’t really believe in a literal Devil?” Yes, I do. The Bible clearly teaches it. You cannot explain the sad state of society without believing in the person of Satan. He is the “prince of the power of the air.” He is a spiritual being, who moves to and fro without the constraints you and I possess living in a physical body. He is the ruler of the fallen angels. He is the “spirit” which is presently working in those who are disobedient to God. The Word of God declares that people are in the “snare of the Devil” (II Tim 2:26). They are entrapped and under the power of Satan. Before coming to know Christ, you are a slave to Satan’s purposes. This is why Satan is called “the god of this world” (II Cor 4:4). People don’t realize that there is a spiritual realm beyond the physical one. Satan easily controls and directs you without you realizing it.

YOU ARE CONTROLLED BY THE LUSTS OF THE FLESH AND THE MIND - “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” (V-3)

The old English word “conversation” does not merely mean speech. The idea is that of conduct or behavior. Before salvation, you live and conduct yourself according to various lusts (sinful desires). Your “walk” (lifestyle) is dominated by the lusts of the flesh and the mind. Sin isn’t confined merely to physical acts, but also includes thoughts. The word “flesh” is used to denote what is in complete opposition to the Spirit of God. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal 5:17). Notice there is no exception to this control by sinful desires - “We all.” The control is very strong and very complete.

By “the desires of the flesh” Paul means the “inordinate affections” (Col 3:5) or unrestrained impulses or appetites of the body. These things take control of your life and dominate you. Eating is a normal function of the body, but under sin it can dominate you. You become a glutton. Sleeping is a normal function of the body, but under sin there is a desire to be lazy and avoid work. Pleasure is not forbidden by God, but what happens is that you become a “lover of pleasure more than a lover of God” (II Tim 3:4). You desire to party and enjoy yourself - eat, drink and be merry - while God, work, and family obligations are left out. While God ordained sexual relations, this bodily function dominates people. Sex-mania controls our world (TV, movies, magazines, etc.). God is saying, “Sin’s power is demonstrated by the fact that bodily appetites dominate you. You have lost control!”

There are also the “desires of the mind” to consider. Why is there jealousy, envy, malice, pride, hatred, wrath, and bitterness within you? Why does your mind dwell on sexual lusts? Why is there a tendency to covet what other people

possess? Why do you plot revenge upon those you perceive to be your enemies? The Bible declares about man, “every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [is] only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Every sin you ever commit starts within you. Murder begins with unjustified anger raging within your breast. Adultery originates with some unclean fantasy that you have indulged. Theft proceeds from coveting what belongs to your neighbor. Thus, the Bible teaches, “Keep [guard] thy heart with all diligence for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23).

I could go on and on. The point is every aspect of your being is corrupted by sin. You are TOTALLY DEPRAVED.

3. YOU ARE UNABLE TO HELP YOURSELF

How can you help yourself out of the terrible spiritual state in which you find yourself? You are dominated by the world, Satan, and various lusts. You are separated from God by your transgressions and sins. You are a rebel! You cannot do anything but disobey God in the condition you are in! “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom 8:8). You might say, “Wait a minute, I have a FREE WILL. I can choose to do anything my heart desires.” But what does your heart, which is deceitful above all things, desire? What does a rebel against God, controlled by Satan, desire? The Bible speaks of those who sin as being “servants [slaves] of sin” (Rom 6:17). Where is this freedom of which you speak? Sin is your master! “There is NONE that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:11-12).

Suppose a large, thick, rare T-bone steak and a wonderful, huge tossed salad were placed in front of a hungry lion. What would the lion choose to eat? Suppose you make the tossed salad as appetizing and colorful as possible with carrots, red cabbage, cucumbers, tomatoes, cheese, broccoli, lettuce, and radishes. You could put all the blue cheese dressing on the salad you wished, but the lion will always choose the fresh red meat. Why? Because his nature dictates his selection of food. He may ask for the A-1 sauce, but he will never ask for croutons!

So it is with the sinner and sin. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may you also do good, who are accustomed to do evil” (Jer 13:23). You are totally dominated and controlled by the lusts of the body and mind and Satan is actively working in you to do evil.

Summary: You are a dead sinner, totally depraved, and unable to help yourself.

III. YOUR ONLY HOPE AS A DEFILED AND DEAD SINNER IS TO BE MADE ALIVE BY GOD

1. GOD’S GREAT MERCY AND LOVE - “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, Even when we were dead in sins...” (V-4-5a)

Paul is speaking to believers in this passage. He is explaining their previous dead state and how they came to salvation in Jesus Christ. “This is the terrible spiritual condition everyone in the world is in and this is how you (as a child of God) were changed and granted salvation.” What I wish to make clear is that V-4-5 do not apply to everyone. They refer only to those who have come to know

the Lord.

How does Paul explain salvation? Does he speak of man’s ability to choose God and reject Satan? Does he emphasize man’s free will? No, the Gospel is introduced by two words - “But God.” God reaches out in compassion and love and saves totally depraved sinners. Just when everything looks black and utterly hopeless, God enters the picture - “But God.” The Gospel message is not how man cooperates with God in salvation. It is not about how you can turn your life around by some religious reformation. It is not about the power of positive thinking. There is no teaching on how you can gain God’s favor by doing good works. The Gospel is all about how God saves helpless sinners through the Person and work of Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world [Gentiles as well as Jews] that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16). Your hope is not to be found in yourself, but in God. God’s rich mercy and great love moved Him to send Jesus as a Savior for sinners. What right does any defiled sinner have to be saved? What demand could anyone place upon God to show mercy to rebellious sinners? Why should God the Father provide the unspeakable gift of the sacrifice of His own beloved Son? Yet Jesus Christ died for the “ungodly” that He might save them from sin and hell. For God “so loved” that He willingly gave His Son to die in the place of the most vile and disobedient people. Jesus came to “save His people [those given to Him by the Father] from their sins” (Matt 1:21). All who place their faith in Jesus Christ are promised forgiveness and eternal life. “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Rom 10:9).

It is important to note, in emphasizing that salvation is solely by grace, Paul makes it clear that even the “faith” to embrace Christ is granted by God. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it [faith] is the gift of God” (Eph 2:8). Faith is said to be the fruit of the Spirit of God (Gal 5:22) and therefore is called “the faith which is by Him [God]” (Acts 3:16). Yes, even faith is part of the merciful provision of God for those He loves.

2. GOD’S GIFT OF SPIRITUAL LIFE - “Hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (V-5b).

In 1818 Mary Shelley wrote the horror story, FRANKENSTEIN. It is about a young medical student, Dr. Frankenstein, who tries to create a human being from dead bodies. Now the main obstacle in creating this being was that while the body could be constructed, it was lifeless. The creature could not be made to move, walk, act, etc., because it was dead. Dr. Frankenstein hooks up the body to electrical wires which are then connected to a lightning rod on top of the castle. During a severe storm, the lightning strikes, and the dead monster comes to life. In this aspect of the story, I believe Shelley was indicating that life must come from above, from God. Man cannot create life.

Almost 2000 years ago, Jesus died a cruel and horrible death atop Mount Calvary. As He was dying He said, “Father into thy hands I commend My spirit” and then He “gave up the ghost.” Now everyone seeing this (the two thieves, women disciples, John, Roman soldiers, Joseph of Arimathea, etc.) could testify: “He is dead.” A stone was rolled against the dark mouth of the burial cave and sealed with Pilate’s seal. He was officially pronounced dead. But

on the morning of the third day, an angel rolled away that grave stone and proclaimed, “He is ALIVE!” He had risen from the dead! The grave clothes were left behind, but Jesus was gone! “I am He that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive for evermore” (Rev 1:18).

Something like this, is what Paul says happens to dead sinners so that they become alive. What happened to Christ physically, happens to sinners spiritually. The words, “quickened us together with Christ,” indicate that there is a connection between Christ’s resurrection and a person’s salvation. “Quickened” means to be made alive or spiritually resurrected from a dead state.

How is it that a defiled and dead sinner is changed and made into a new creature in Christ? You must be given spiritual life by God! The Bible calls this a spiritual birth. “Except a man be born again [from above], he cannot see the kingdom of God” (Jn 3:3). Why is it that a sinner repents of sin and believes the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? This individual has been made alive by God! “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you” (Ezk 36:26). Here is a gracious promise, but in what way will God accomplish it? You must ask God for a new heart! “Thus saith the LORD God: I will yet be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them” (Ezk 36:37)! Cry earnestly to God for a new heart, for a spiritual resurrection, for the granting of life. God commands you to repent of your sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21). Whosoever believes shall not perish but have everlasting life (Jn 3:16).

MAIN CONCLUSION:

Now there is a great danger of not believing what you have heard from the Scriptures! Like the oilman who didn’t believe the cook’s dog was actually being chased in the house by a lion, you can deny that what you have heard from the Bible is right. But Ephesians two is quite plain. Do you really believe you are born in a totally depraved state? Do you really believe that God alone can grant you spiritual life? Total depravity is a crucial doctrine relating to salvation. To deny this and cast it aside, will leave you in eternal peril!

TOTAL DEPRAVITY Man’s Actual State Before God BY JACK A. WERTH

“And you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 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: 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. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” - Eph 2:1-5 KJV

Charles Berlitz, a vice-president of the Berlitz Schools of Language, tells of a trip to Sumatra. He went to Sumatra with an oilman who had studied Indonesian with them in New York. The man bought a house outside Palembang, and Berlitz urged him to plunge right in with the language. The first call the pupil took at the office turned out to be from one of his newly-hired servants. “Just goes to show,” the oilman said when he hung up, “you think you know the language, but when you get here you find you don’t know a thing about it. It sounded just like he said a tiger was in the house, chasing the cook’s dog.” The oilman just shook his head not believing this was the real message. However, he had heard right! A tiger was actually in his house chasing the cook’s dog! He just couldn’t accept this as the truth!

When it comes to the message of God found in the Bible, I’m afraid that most people do not really believe what God says. The text above clearly states the depraved condition of man, but upon hearing this awful message do you really believe it? The doctrine of man’s total depravity is never well-received. As Paul explains, you are “dead in trespasses and sins” and only by God’s marvelous grace can you be made alive spiritually. Your will is not free to choose good over evil for you must be “created in Christ Jesus” to be enabled to do “good works” (Eph 2:10). This teaching is not just ancient words of a dead apostle, but the truth of God stated by inspiration of the Holy Spirit for every generation. You must carefully consider what God says here.

I. YOU ARE A DEFILED SINNER IN THE EYES OF GOD

1. YOU ARE GUILTY OF TRESPASSES AND SINS - “in trespasses and sins” (V-1)

The Bible declares that you are guilty of great evil in the eyes of God. A “trespass” represents a fall, a false step, an offense. It suggests that you have lost your way and strayed into forbidden territory. You’ve probably seen a “No Trespassing” sign on a piece of property. It means you have no right to enter that area. Walking onto that land means you have violated the law and are guilty of trespassing. “Sin” means “missing the mark.” It suggests the picture of a man shooting at a target with a bow and arrow and falling short of it. Both trespass and sin imply that you have broken God’s Moral Law (Ten Commandments). “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 Jn 3:4). You have fallen short of the standard which God requires of you. In your thoughts and desires, as well as your actions, you have

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