

Man's Dire Predicament

Ephesians 2:1-3

July 27, 2025

DAY 1: Overview of Ephesians 1 and 2

1. Ephesians 1 lays out the past, present and future of God's magnificent plan of our salvation. Ephesians 2 lays us the past, present, and future of the people Jesus saves.

2. Ephesians 1 talks about our spiritual *possessions*.

Ephesians 2 talks about our spiritual *position*.

The central idea of Ephesians 1 and 2 is this:

Sin works against us. God works for us.

3. Paul's metaphors of our condition before conversion: the slave auction and the cemetery.

Paul's metaphors of our condition after conversion: resurrected, new life, alive and free.

4. What is the natural condition of mankind?

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

a. The secular, optimistic view: man is basically good.

"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."

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*!

b. The secular realistic view: man is not well; We are victims of others

"People do wrong to each other because of the wrong that was done to them. What most explains bad behavior is the wrong done to us. We are not to blame." The situation is not desperate. We can try harder, do more, perhaps. This belief about human nature is reflected in Rodney King's question, "Why can't we all just get along?"

c. The biblical view: man has both dignity and depravity.

We are made in the image of God, the crown of creation, which gives us dignity. But we are also sinners, depraved, rebels away from God and His ways.

5. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 2: I am dead – Ephesians 2:1

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

1. We are all 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 has no appetite for spiritual food. The same is true for natural man.

2. 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.”

3. “**Trespases**”- The Greek is used in different ways, like taking a fall, taking a false step, or an offence. 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 God’s path.

4. “**Sins**” – “missing the target, a failure to measure up to God’s standards.” Vaughan, p40

5. These are the causes of deadness. “It is as though the whole world were one vast graveyard, and every gravestone had the same inscription, ‘Dead through sin.’” -Dr. Curtis Vaughan

6. Deadness is seen at different levels. Sometimes it is seen in personal moral decay or cultural moral decay, spiritual blindness, indifference to the things of God, the decay of relationships where there is little “life” happening between people.

7. When the bible says we are all sinners, it is not saying we are all axe murderers. We are a people who walk away from God’s road, who miss the target of how we are to live.

8. (We are) dead, and the only difference between one sinner and another is the state of decay. The lost skid row meth addict appears to be more dead outwardly than the unsaved CEO of a tech corporation, but both are dead in sin. The only difference is in the level of decay.

9. 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 opposition to God, we cut ourselves off from the very source of real life we need. 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.

10. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: I am disobedient Ephesians 2:2

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. They placed themselves at the center of their lives instead of God. They made themselves their supreme authority with final say on what was right and wrong, wise and foolish, moral and immoral. The rest of the Old Testament are illustrations of, “Well, how’s that working out for you???”

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. There is social and societal pressure on us to try to get us to conform to the ways of the world (Rom. 12:2) A lost person, either consciously or unconsciously, is pulled by the values and attitudes of this world away from God’s values and purposes.

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.

- **Satan.**

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.**

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

7. The flesh is that part of us that wants to be in control, and that is loathe to let God be in either daily control or final control of my life. When push comes to shove, *I’ll do what I want to do.* (See also Psalm 51:5; 58:3)

“A dog behaves like a dog because he has a dog’s nature.”

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 4: I am depraved – Ephesians 2:3

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. The bible speaks of human depravity. Depravity is not a synonym for an ax-murderer or rapist, what we consider the most heinous of human acts. Instead, depravity is the pervasive and corrupting influence of sin on every aspect of human nature. It doesn't mean humans are as evil as possible, but that sin affects all parts of their being, making them unable to please God or turn to Him on their own. It doesn't mean we can't do things that look good and kind on the outside.

Romans 1:28 Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.

²⁹ They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹ they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. ³² Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

2. Jesus taught us on this subject:

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

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?

3. We live to please ourselves, our desires. We are at the mercy of our passions. “Cravings” is the word we use as “lust.” We are attracted to a desire for what is forbidden.

4. We usually think of illicit sex, or some form of substance abuse. Certainly true, but the category is much broader and deeper than “social” sins. 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, not blame? To understand?

5. What depravity simply means is the drive within to satisfy me, in whatever context I find myself. My human nature “autopilot” 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 autopilot should be other-centered.

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 5: I am doomed – Ephesians 2:3

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

1. 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.

2. On the other hand, many secular people think of God as an easygoing, grandfather, rocking on His front porch, saying, “boys will be boys.” You will hear them say, “I don’t in a God of wrath.”

3. “His wrath is a permanent and consistent element in His nature and is best seen as the reverse side of His holy love. God’s wrath represents the divine hostility to all that is evil. It is a personal quality without which God could not be fully righteous. Nor is his wrath inconsistent with his love, for without righteous wrath love easily degenerates into mere sentimentality.” -Curtis Vaughan

4. God will go to incredible lengths to curtail human evil.

5. Amazingly, if you asked most people if they were going to heaven someday, they’d undoubtedly say, “well, of course. My good outweighs my bad.” They are dead. They are disobedient. They are depraved. They are doomed.

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.

6. Amazingly he not only offers you a stay of execution but the verdict of “Not guilty.”

7. The price? His own life.

8. What strikes you from today’s devotional?