

How Dead Is Dead?

A Look At The Bible Doctrine “Total Depravity”



Let's start out at the beginning, in the book of Genesis:

Genesis 2:16 - “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: 17 But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

OK. So we know from the rest of the story of Adam and Eve that they ate the “forbidden fruit” and yet did not **physically** die. So does that mean that God lied to Adam in Genesis 2:17? Not quite, because what happened was that Adam and Even **spiritually** died... fellowship with God was broken and their minds were darkened along with the minds of all their offspring:

Romans 8:5 - “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”

Romans 8:6 - “For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.”

Romans 8:7 - “Because the carnal mind is enmity [at war] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.”

Romans 8:8 - “So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.”

Romans 8:9 - “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”

We see in John Gill's Commentary Of The Bible a description of this passage in Romans chapter 8 that examines the depth and scope of the depravity of man and the degree of his rebellion against his Creator:

Romans 8, verse 7:

“Because the carnal mind is enmity against God”: These words contain a reason why the issue of carnal mindedness is death; because the carnal mind, the wisdom of the flesh, is not only an enemy, but enmity itself against God: against his being; it reasons against it; it wishes he was not; it forms unworthy notions of him; thinks him such an one as itself; and endeavours to bury him in forgetfulness, and erase out of its mind all memorials of him: it is at enmity against his perfections; either denying his omniscience; or arraigning his justice and faithfulness; or despising his goodness, and abusing his grace and mercy: it finds fault with, and abhors his decrees and purposes; quarrels with

his providences; it is implacable against his word and Gospel; especially the particular doctrines of grace, the Father's grace in election, the Son's in redemption, and the Spirit's in regeneration; and has in the utmost contempt the ordinances and people of Christ. This enmity is universal, it is in all men in unregeneracy, either direct or indirect, hidden or more open; it is undeserved; it is natural and deeply rooted in the mind, and irreconcilable without the power and grace of God. It shows itself in an estrangedness [separation] from God; in holding friendship with the world, in harbouring the professed enemies of God, in living under the government of sin and Satan; in hating what God loves, and in loving what God hates; in omitting what God commands, and committing what he forbids; it manifests itself in their language, and throughout the whole of their conversations.

“For it is not subject to the law of God”: The carnal mind is so far from an obedient subjection to the law, that ... it hates and despises it, thwarts and contradicts it in every instance ... which fully proves the enmity of the carnal mind against God; for hereby his [God's] being is tacitly denied, his sovereignty disputed, his image defaced, his government withdrawn from, and these persons are declared, and declare themselves enemies to him.

“neither indeed can be”: without regenerating grace, without the power and Spirit of God, unless it is written upon the heart by the finger of God; for carnal men are **dead** in sin, and so without strength to obey the law; and besides, the carnal mind, and the law of God, are directly contrary one to another. Where is man's power and **free will**? no wonder the carnal mind does not stoop to the Gospel of Christ, when it is not, and cannot be subject to the law of God. Hence we see the necessity of almighty power, and efficacious grace in conversion. It is Christ's work to subject men to the law, and which is done when he justifies by his righteousness.

The degree and scope of Biblical ignorance in the Church of our day - regarding the extent of the lostness of fallen mankind - is just plain scary. We have such a majority of preachers and teachers in the pulpit who call themselves Bible-believers but yet are so off-base regarding one of the most essential doctrines of the Christian faith. Any serious student of the Bible would have to admit that even just looking at a couple of verses should be enough to convince a true Spirit-indwelt Christian that God plainly and clearly describes our utter spiritual lostness prior to conversion. Take Romans 5:6 and John 3:19 for example:

Romans 5:6 - “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”

John 3:19 - “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

The Arminian (free-will) preacher would have you believe that somehow, these people who love darkness rather than light, who are at war with God - in that state, in that spiritual condition - can and will turn to Christ for salvation. Isn't that amazing! Won't God be so proud of them! How much better they must be than all others who continue to reject Christ! Surely they have a great deal to boast about in themselves, do they not? And obviously they must not be as LOST as God says they are in their unregenerated state.

Next, in Ephesians chapter 2 we see clear statements about the spiritual deadness of the unregenerated soul:

Ephesians 2:1 - "And you hath he quickened [made alive], 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. 4 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;)"

OK, so what exactly does it mean to be spiritually dead? Well let's take a look. John Gill's Commentary on Ephesians 2 verse 1 sheds quite a bit of light on this subject:

"who were dead in trespasses and sins": not only dead in Adam, in whom they sinned, being their federal head and representative; and in a legal sense, the sentence of condemnation and death having passed upon them; but in a moral sense, through original sin, and their own actual transgressions: which death lies in a separation from God, Father, Son, and Spirit, such are **dead** as to their understandings, wills, and affections, with respect to spiritual things, and as to their capacity to do any thing that is spiritually good; and in a loss of original righteousness; ... and in a servitude to sin, Satan, and the world: hence it appears, that man must be in himself unacceptable to God, infectious and hurtful to his fellow creatures, and incapable of helping himself.

Ephesians 2 verse 5:

"Hath quickened us together with Christ": which may be understood either of regeneration, when a soul that is dead in a moral or spiritual sense, is quickened and made alive; ... they can feel the load and weight of sin; see their lost state and condition, the odiousness [extreme offensiveness] of sin, and the beauty of a Saviour, the insufficiency of their own righteousness, and the fulness and suitableness of Christ's;

... for previous to it [this new birth] they are **dead**, and in this quickening work are entirely passive; nor can regenerate persons quicken themselves,

when in dead and lifeless frames, and much less unregenerate sinners; but this is God's act, the act of God the Father; though not exclusive of the Son, who quickens whom he will; nor of the Spirit, who is the Spirit of life from Christ;

... men are **dead** in a legal sense, and on account of sin, are under the sentence of death; though they naturally think themselves alive, and in a good state; but when the Spirit of God comes, he strikes dead all their hopes of life by a covenant of works; ... by showing the ... exceeding sinfulness of sin; and how incapable they are of satisfying the law; ... and then he works faith in them, whereby they revive and live; they see pardon and righteousness in Christ,

How do we know whether or not John Gill was too harsh in his descriptions of the condition of those that are spiritually dead? Well, we have God's word to confirm Gill's assessment:

Jeremiah 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Romans 9:33 - "As it is written, Behold, I lay in Sion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed."

The most MAJOR offense of the Gospel, even to many people who consider themselves "Born-Again" and "Bible Believers", is that unsaved man does not have a free-will to accept Christ. He is spiritually dead, not just wounded. He is not drowning and just needs to reach out and grab the life-preserver. He is dead at the bottom of the sea, needing God to reach down and pull him out of the depths and restore life unto his lifeless corpse.

Driver-seat salvation

Ever since the Garden Of Eden, man has wanted to "be like God" and to have control over his own destiny. And so along came **the free-will gospel**, allowing the sinner to get himself saved anytime he pleased, ignoring the many biblical declarations that man is at God's mercy, completely and totally...

Romans 9:18 - "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth."

So my friend, if you ever TRULY came to know the Lord Jesus Christ, it was not because YOU accepted Him, but rather because HE sent a messenger of the Gospel and convicted and converted you by the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. That's how much we are at the mercy of God and that is why NOBODY

can boast in their “decision”. Do I hear any “amens”? Salvation is completely by the grace of God ALONE. The sinner has nothing to do with procuring it. Salvation is not a numbers game nor a “recite this prayer” formula. Preachers need to just focus on preaching the law of God, the holiness of God, the judgment of God and the reality of Hell. It is then up to God to use that preaching as He sees fit, to convert or harden whom He wills as He wills.

Lastly, I have a BIG problem with those evangelists who tell people to bow their heads and close their eyes so that sinners can sheepishly raise their hand to receive Christ. The Lord Jesus and his disciples never told any crowds to bow their heads and close their eyes so that sinners won’t be embarrassed by expressing their desire to follow Christ. What those evangelists need to do (if in fact they are NOT wolves in sheep’s clothing) is to tell sinners that they are one heartbeat away from the eternal agonies of Hell. Sinners don’t need to worry about somebody seeing them raise their hand. They need to worry about entering a Christless eternity at any moment. Now is the time...Today is the day of salvation! — *RM Kane*

PS: Comments on this article (and any others) are always welcome, even if you do not agree with the author. We can handle criticism, but we appreciate it being done in a God-glorifying, kind, edifying way.
