

—{1}. **Ephesians 2:1–3** . . . . . **Mankind: Dead on Arrival**

A. Introduction

1. I confess that my sermon title sounds gruesome and tragic but I don't want any of us to miss the point: the tragedy told in our Scripture reading of Genesis 3; that every man, woman and child on entering this world is already dead, dead on arrival
2. listen now to this morning's text, Ephesians 2: 1–3 — <sup>1</sup> *And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. <sup>3</sup> Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.*
3. Experience proves these words to be true
  - a. try convincing an unbeliever that he or she is a sinner
    - (A) what is their response?
    - (B) *'but I'm only doing what is natural'*
  - b. now, that really is the very point:
    - (A) ever since Adam and Eve yielded to Satan's suggestion
    - (B) sin is the natural way of life of a fallen human nature
  - c. such a tragic truth that in verse 1 the AV translators of our text added the words *'hath he quickened'* from verse 5
  - d. a tragic truth of which we all need to be fully aware
  - e. believers, so that they may rejoice with David, *"He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay, And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm."* (Psalms 40:2) and, for unbelievers, that they too may believe and so with us *"... wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come."* (1 Thessalonians 1:10)

4. our outline is one suggested by Rev. John Piper: <sup>-(2)}</sup>.
  - a. It consists of three statements, all containing the letter "S"
    - (A) we were Sick unto death with Sin
    - (B) we were Sabotaged by Satan
    - (C) we were Sentenced to hell (or, 'Sheol')
  - b. unbelieving mankind does not accept these truths, because
    - (A) the liberal church has falsely taught the contrary: man-centred philosophy and a loving, wrath-less God
    - (B) these truths paint a disagreeable picture of mankind
    - (C) these, being spiritual truths, cannot be discerned until the Holy Spirit of God reveals them to a person

B. We were Sick unto death with Sin . . . . . Ephesians 2:1

1. in point of fact our text says goes even beyond sickness:
  - a. **And you were dead in your trespasses and sins**
  - b. sin had done its heinous work and we were dead: '**... when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death**' (James 1:15)
2. a nurse related this personal experience
  - a. **The orthopaedic surgeon I work for was moving to a new office, and his staff was helping transport many of the items.**
  - b. **I sat the display skeleton in the front of my car, his bony arm across the back of my seat. I hadn't considered the drive across town. At one traffic light, the stares of the people in the car beside me became obvious, and I looked across and explained, "I'm delivering him to my doctor's office."**
  - c. **The other driver leaned out of his window. "I hate to tell you, lady," he said, "but I think it's too late!"**<sub>{3}</sub>.
  - d. that's an accurate picture of man's situation before God
  - e. this is what WE were before Jesus saved us: incapable of doing any spiritual good; unable to please God; dead in sin

3. how does natural man respond to this spiritual truth?
  - a. John Piper illustrates this with a committee of **blind people**
    - (A) **developing elaborate theories that vision doesn't exist**
    - (B) **stating that colour and light are pious inventions**
  - b. that is how the world naturally responds to gospel truth

C. We were Sabotaged by Satan . . . . . Ephesians 2:2

1. **in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.** – this tells us three things about our old nature; about unbelieving mankind
  - a. one: they walk in conformity to this world
  - b. two: they are dominated by this world's ruler
  - c. three: this world's ruler is actively engaged with them
  
2. **'course,'** or literally **'age, generation,'** means **'the present order of nature'**– we inhabit a world seeking to conform us to its ideas, its customs, its culture, its natural, sinful mould
  - a. thus Paul in Romans after explaining the gospel of Jesus Christ, says to believers **"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, ... do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, ..."** (Romans 12:1-2)
  - b. enforced conformity is a way of subjecting people: it's been used in the church, in schools, in society – it was used in Hitler's Germany and is being used in Communist states
  - c. who is the world ruler that does this now as in Paul's time?
  
3. he is **'the prince of the power of the air'** – he is Satan
  - a. unconsciously we breathe the air engulfing our planet
  - b. unconsciously, too, mankind inbreathes the ideas of Satan and his demonic servants who permeate this world
  - c. by the sovereign will of God, Satan has been permitted, for a time, to control the dominant thoughts of this world
  - d. make no mistake about it; Satan has a domain in which he rules, and that domain is this present world-

age

- e. deliverance from his rule can only come from God: *“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son,”* (Colossians 1:13)
- f. because the world’s ruler is evil, so also man, dwelling in Satan’s domain, has been acclimatized, adapted to evil
- g. but also Satan rules his dominion actively and aggressively

4. he is *‘the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience’*

- a. disbelief and disobedience are both included in the Greek
- b. *‘sons of disobedience’* is a Jewish way to describe persons whose very nature is disobedient and unbelieving
- c. so, unbelievers are now being constantly subjected to the active working of Satan
  - (A) that includes kind people, nice people, religious people
  - (B) Satan is the author of all false sect; he loves religion
  - (C) no wonder it takes God’s resurrection power to rescue
- d. what is the result for natural mankind? Without Christ

D. We were Sentenced to Hell (or, ‘Sheol’) . . . . . Ephesians 2:3

1. given that mankind

- a. is helplessly dead: sick unto death in sin
- b. is devilishly seduced: sabotaged by Satan
- c. Ephesians 2:3 tells us of mankind’s state and fate — *“Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.”*
- d. man, on account of sin,
  - (A) is naturally a child of wrath
  - (B) by nature, he is headed for hell
  - (C) the OT word ‘Sheol’ is used of a place where God’s wrath is carried out: *“For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.”* (Deuteronomy 32:22)

- (D) Jesus in the NT expresses the same idea with the word Gehenna ('valley of Hinnon'), a deep, narrow valley to the south of Jerusalem, where refuse from the city was continually being burned; the place where everything in the city that was rotten and corrupt was dumped
- (E) that is where mankind is naturally headed

2. this verse tells us of mankind's state: it is corrupt

- a. corrupt because he lives only to satisfy the corrupt lusts and desires of the flesh and the mind
- b. this has been the case since the fall
- c. that this state will result in punishment has already been shown in Genesis 6:5, 7a: "<sup>5</sup> Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. ... <sup>7</sup> The LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, ...'"
- d. so man's state, regardless of whatever good deed he may seek to do, proceeds inevitably toward his fate

3. he is a child of wrath – that same Jewish form of expression

- a. a person whose very nature places him under God's wrath
- b. there is abroad in the world today a view of God
  - (A) Rev. Ray Stedman called it the ZAP theory of wrath
  - (B) that God is just sitting waiting so that He can punish
  - (C) but, Stedman says, God's wrath is better understood as being 'the law of inevitable consequences'
  - (D) let me illustrate: if I try to leave this room without first going to and opening the door I will consequently suffer, because I have disregarded physical laws
- c. if a man ignores God's law, His universal, spiritual law; if he disobeys God, then he faces the inevitable consequence: judgement, punishment, eternal destruction, hell-fire

E. Conclusion

- 1. A father and daughter were walking on the prairies when they saw a grass fire approaching faster than they could run. There was nowhere to flee. The father lit some grass on fire and when it had burned sufficiently, he and his daughter stepped onto the blackened earth. The flames approached and passed around them because they were standing where it was already burnt. —{4}.

2. when we step into Jesus Christ; when we accept his death of the cross for us; then we step into the place that is already burnt, because he suffered the wrath of God for every punishment due to us, and the fires of hell can never touch us.
3. Rejoice then, O Christian, that you are alive forevermore because of the work of Jesus, your Saviour, and exercise yourself on behalf of those who are still dead in Satan's domain

1. © 2008 by Garth Hutchinson, Faith Fellowship Baptist Church of Aurora (Ontario): may be distributed or quoted freely, only let this be done to the glory “of the great God and our Saviour, Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). Except as noted otherwise, quotations are from the New American Standard (NAS) version of the Bible, © 1960 ... 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

Various other English versions of the Holy Bible may be used in this sermon. Some (for example, the AV, ASV, and NAS) seek to be strictly translations, while others (and especially PHIL) contain paraphrasing which involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Nevertheless, there is little material difference in meaning among these. Some prove slightly clearer on some verses than others. Looking at more than one version sometimes sheds additional light on any particular verse. Explanatory additions to the Bible text are shown in {braces}. The versions are identified as:

ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

Further sermons and illustrations may be found at the web-site, [www.holwick.com](http://www.holwick.com). Materials in this sermon from Rev. David Holwick's database are identified by “Kerux” followed by a sermon or illustration number.

2. The message, “Why We Need a Savior” by Rev. John Piper– Kerux sermons #2657 – has heavily influenced this message, as he expounds so well this passage
3. “Delivering the Goods” – Kerux illustrations #35262
4. Adapted from Kerux illustrations #729