

Ephesians 2:1-3

There is a popular little phrase that goes something like this, “God helps those that help themselves.” I’m not sure where the quote originated but I do believe, based on texts like ours for today, that the Apostle Paul would have serious inclinations about it! Today’s passage constitutes a bit of a shift in the subject matter from the overt authority of Christ to the salvation that our powerful and authoritative Savior offers undeserving and incapable men. In these few verses, we learn so much about the natural condition of lost men and, therefore, we are brought to esteem the grace of God in Christ all the more!

1. The condition of man’s souls
 - a. Paul begins chapter 2 by asserting that all men are, by nature, “dead in their trespasses and sins”
 - b. What does this mean?
 - i. Paul does not refer here to physical death!
 - ii. We know that all men will eventually physically die but the allusion here is to the spiritual death that is a product of the fall
 - iii. We were brought forth in iniquity, we are sinners “by nature” (v. 3) and this means that we are under the curse of sin which is spiritual death
 - c. What does this mean?
 - i. Our souls are dead to the things of God (we neither desire them nor are we naturally responsive to them)
 - ii. We are separated from His life-giving presence and, naturally, unresponsive to His commands and exhortations
 - iii. The result is a blindness to the things of God and an enslavement to sin which renders us incapable and disinterested in following the Lord
 - d. The implications of this teaching are profound
 - i. The problem with the world is grounded in the hearts of men
 1. Yes it is true that creation is under a curse but it is just as true that man is the cause of the curse!
 2. More to the point, man’s coldness and deadness towards the things of God requires a heart change that he is unable and unwilling to pursue
 - a. So much of what passes as potential solutions to the societal and cultural problems that ail us amounts to frivolous and fruitless proposals that don’t deal with the root cause
 - b. If you look at man as simply “sick” in need of a bit of help then you have a much more positive view of the issue than Scripture

- c. We are worse than we think and, therefore, the solution is more drastic than lost men might imagine

2. The universality of the problem

- a. I want you to notice something here that is exceedingly basic... this condition troubles all of us
- b. Notice in verse 2 and 3 how Paul includes all men
 - i. He says in verse 2 that the Ephesians (believers in the Lord Jesus Christ) also “once walked” in sins
 - ii. Notice in verse 3, “we” (that includes Paul and the Ephesians) all once lived in the flesh
- c. The point is that all men are born with this dead heart
- d. There is no category of individual who is exempt from the curse of death... all of us are inflicted

3. The dangerous reality

- a. The effect of this is that all men are “by nature children of wrath”...
- b. What does this mean? It means that our natural state demands the justice of God!
- c. The wrath that is spoken of here is the very wrath of God which is poured out on all who transgress His law
 - i. When you and I were conceived and brought forth, we were naturally enemies of God because our hearts were hellbent (pun intended) on opposing Him and His law
 - ii. We were not born “good” and corrupted (as many like to think), instead we were born with sinful desires in our hearts and our maturation only gave opportunity for us to exercise the inclinations that well up within us
- d. Save the grace of God in Christ, there is no hope for men like this
 - i. How can a dead man save himself?
 - ii. How can a guilty man plead for a stay of punishment before a holy God?
- e. The only potential solution is that God might change us! The good news is that He has moved when we couldn’t. in our dead state, the Lord pursued us in Christ. He took the wrath due our sin and “made us alive together with Christ” Ephesians 2:5 (notice the only actor in that statement, Christ!)
 - i. This is good news, and it follows in next week’s lesson, but it only appears glorious when we realize how bad things were before!