

## How Dead is Dead?

Ephesians 2:1-5

### Ephesians 2:1-5 (CSB)

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world, according to the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit now working in the disobedient. We too all previously lived among them in our fleshly desires, carrying out the inclinations of our flesh and thoughts, and we were by nature children under wrath as the others were also.**

Smartphones have changed humanity—and not all for the better...

**We DEPEND on our devices—even addicted to them...**

- **SmartPhones are no longer a privilege—smartphones are a basic human right...**

We have become ENTITLED to using our smartphones...and many other luxuries in life.

- **And we so-easily become entitled...**

3 steps to becoming entitled:

1. Receive something with gratitude.
2. Get used to it and use it as a routine.
3. Routine use leads us to feel we deserve it by right.

**In our culture of entitlement, it is easy for us to confuse what we desire with what we deserve.**

- **Entitlement can affect the way we view the church...**
- **When we consistently receive good things in life, we can fall into a sense of entitlement.**
- **And if we are not careful, our sense of entitlement can even define the way we approach God.**

- *Entitlement is birthed from a sense of justice within us—it is what we feel we DESERVE.*
- *We feel we DESERVE certain things, and we develop a sense of ENTITLEMENT with these things.*

**But what is it that we really, truly deserve?**

- **We are created in God's image.**
  - This means we deserve and are entitled to Dignity, Respect and Relationships with others
- **AND, we've all sinned.**
  - This means that we all must be held accountable for our sin.

**Our passage today reveal that the consequences for our sin is worse than maybe we had imagined...**

Some of us might be living life with a sense of entitlement, and today might be a good wake-up for us.

- It is good for us to remember where our sin leads us apart from God.
- It is good for us to recognize the extent of the damage that our sin has caused to our hearts.
- It is good to be reminded of what it is that we truly deserve because our sin, apart from God.

So we are going to start by examining our verses and we will see SEVEN aspects of the human condition apart from Jesus.

- **WARNING—This is brutal.**
- This is going to be much worse than you may be thinking...

### Ephesians 2:1a (CSB)

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived...**

#### 1. **Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**

- We are completely incapable of saving ourselves.
- We are completely incapable of sparking spiritual life within ourself.
- **AND**, we are completely incapable of saving others or sparking spiritual life in them.

**Dead deer story...**

- That deer was DEAD ON THAT SUBURBAN.
- The Apostle Paul says we were DEAD IN OUR TRESPASSES AND SIN.

- WE ARE SPIRITUALLY DEAD IN OUR SIN APART FROM GOD.

Without Jesus, I am laid out dead on the hood of my own sin.

- No motivational, self-help, existential, self-realization would have any effect... I was DEAD.
- No amount of other people WILLING me to be saved could help me...I was DEAD!
- No amount of “thinking of a happy place” or “Trying to do whatever you set you mind to” could have ever helped me.

The dead can only lay in death because the dead are incapable of picking themselves up and giving themselves life.

### **Before Jesus, I was DEAD in my sins.**

- Apart from Jesus, we aren't simply people who need encouragement...
- People who live apart from Jesus don't just need your kindness and generosity.
- People living without the love and joy and hope of Jesus don't just need a pat on the back and some positive thoughts...

### **We must all hear that on our own, we are not morally neutral people choosing between wrong and right.**

- On our own, apart from the saving love of God in Jesus, we are DEAD.
- On our own, apart from Jesus, we are helplessly and hopelessly dead in our sin.

This is harsh, and we are tempted to soften or damper the harshness of this reality, and humanity has ALWAYS tried to damper the harsh reality of sin.

In the Garden of Eden:

### **Genesis 2:15-17 (CSB)**

**Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. 16 The Lord God commanded the man, saying, “From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”**

God CLEARLY communicates from the very beginning that sin will ONLY lead us to death...

In this first sin we see the same truth that Paul is teaching the Christians in Ephesus:

- **When we reject God and seek His blessings apart from Him, then we are disconnected from the source of life—disconnected from God Himself.**

Genesis was written in Hebrew, and there are no superlatives in Hebrew.

- In verse 17 there is no word for “SURLY” when God says you shall “SURLY die.”
- Rather than use a separate word, Ancient Hebrew simply repeats the word that our modern English emphasizes with a superlative.
- SO, Genesis 2:17 in Hebrew, LITERALLY translated reads:

### **Genesis 2:17 (Billy's translation)**

**...but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will DIE DIE.”**

- **In our sin we are apart from God—apart from life.**
- **In our sin we are physically alive, but we are spiritually dead and on our own because our sin separates us from God.**
  - In our sin we DIE DIE.
  - We are DEAD DEAD.

Later on the serpent comes and tempts Adam and Eve & she tries to quote the Lord back to the him:

### **Genesis 3:2-3 (CSB)**

**The woman said to the serpent, “From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’”**

She doesn't say “SURLY DIE”—not DIE DIE...

- She softens it.

- She simply says, “die”...leaving it open to interpretation.
- She’s not adamant about the “degree of death”...

**Eve’s first mistake is to soften God’s response to sin, and people have been trying to do the same ever since.**

- But scripture is clear, the wages of sin is death...

**Adam and Eve did sin, and lived a long physical life, but they lived apart from true life with God, and eventually died.**

...So, Apart from God we are spiritually dead...

The second thing we see about our state apart from God is that:

- 1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**
- 2. Apart from Christ, we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**

**Ephesians 2:1 (CSB)**

**And you were dead in your trespasses and sins in which you previously lived according to the ways of this world [...]**

This refers to our baseline—what we think about life and ourselves, and others and God.

- This vital baseline is what defines our actions...
- This is where our hopes and dreams are formulated...
- This is where we generate a template for what is RIGHT and WRONG—JUST and UNJUST—TRUE and FALSE...

**We either have a worldly perspective or baseline, or we have a Godly perspective.**

In his book *Losing Our Virtue* David Wells described worldliness as:

**[Worldliness is] ...that system of values, in any given age, which has at its center our fallen human perspective, which displaces God and his truth from the world, and which makes sin look normal and righteousness seem strange. It thus gives great plausibility to what is morally wrong and, for that reason, makes what is wrong seem normal. (David Wells, *Losing Our Virtue*, p. 4)**

What patterns exist in our culture where sin seems normal and righteousness seems strange?

#### **— GOSSIP**

The Bible says that gossip is a sin. And so is slander.

- Talking about people behind their backs and being unwilling to confront them for the purpose of change and unity—that is gossip, and the is offensive to God!
- Talking about people to others in a way that tears them down is slander and it is a sin against God!

**Not only are gossip and slander NOT seen as bad in our culture, they are CELEBRATED!**

- Gossip is actually a genre of entertainment!
- Slander is what keeps 24/hour “news” networks operating during the off-hours...

**You cannot buy groceries in our culture without being tempted by GOSSIP and/or SLANDER...**

- So it is no wonder we come by it so easily...
- It is no wonder people are offended when I excuse myself from conversations about others...
- People are actually offended when we decline a conversation about someone who is not present!
- It seems impossible to advance in politics without SLANDERING people.
- It seems impossible to succeed in climbing the ladder without slandering others to advance.

Another thing the Bible CLEARLY calls sin, but is completely normal in the world is:

**—Being a virgin until you get married. Or, not having sex with someone until you are married.**

- This seems INSANE to the world... it seems FOOLISH even.
  - “How do you know you’re compatible?”
  - “How do you know you’ll get along?”
  - “Why wouldn’t you try it out first? You try EVERYTHING ELSE out, why not something as important as this?”
- But scripture clearly teaches that sex is not a commodity that can be separated from commitment!
  - Sexual intimacy is the CONSUMMATION of a union—of a COVENANT!

- This seems weird and crazy and foolish to the world...

**The patterns and norms of the world DO NOT align with scripture, and, the patterns and norms of scripture seem strange and out of place in this world.**

We all are shaped more by the world than we might think...

- You might have been shaped by culture and cultural norms more than you probably know.

**Much like a fish living in the water unaware that he's breathing in the water that surrounds him, the patterns of this world are like the air that we breathe.**

- And if we are not very careful, the constancy of these worldly patterns and ideas normalizes patterns, ideas, attitudes and behaviors to us.
  - Behavior that one time may have seemed shocking to us can become normal and routine if we choose to normalize ourselves and our kids to worldly patterns and ideas.
  - We can be affected more than we realize, and our kids are definitely affected more than we realize.

We have to catch ourselves, because apart from Jesus, we are comforted to the patterns of this world.

The third thing we see about ourselves apart from Jesus is

- 1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**
- 2. Apart from Jesus we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**
- 3. Apart from Jesus we are deceived by the Devil**

**Ephesians 2:2 (NLT)**

**You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil—the commander of the powers in the unseen world.**

The “commander of the unseen world” is Satan—apart from God we obey Satan.

- Satan doesn't have real authority, but he DOES have influence.
- Apart from God we are heavily influenced and deceived by Satan.

The Devil's plan—FROM THE VERY BEGINNING—is to get us to trust in ourselves rather than to trust in God.

- When we do this, we are following his advice.
- When we follow his advice rather than God's, we are trusting in the devil.
- When we follow his advice and trust ourselves rather than God, then we believe his ancient lies:
  - That God is not sufficient...
  - That God is not the ONLY good...
- **That you should try to get the blessings of God APART from the person of God...**

- We ALL, like Eve & Adam in the Garden, we ALL have fallen for the same lie...
- We have all have been deceived by the devil and have put our trust in ourselves over God.
- We have all, therefore, been deceived by Satan and separated from God.

**And if anyone is NOT under the redeeming power of God they are under the enslaving power of God's enemy.**

- 1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**
- 2. Apart from Jesus we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**
- 3. Apart from Jesus we are deceived by the Devil**
- 4. We are born with a sinful condition.**

**Ephesians 2:3a (NIV)**

**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts....**

**When Paul mentions our “flesh” he is not talking about our physical skin.**

- Paul is NOT talking about our PHYSICAL EXISTENCE... He is talking about our sinful nature.
  - He is saying that our “natural state” apart from God—our “flesh”—is opposed to God's will.

**Sin is not simply some acts that we do from time-to-time...**

**Sin is a condition that shapes what we do ALL THE TIME!**

We don't JUST commit sins, we have a sinful NATURE.

- Sin is a disease in our hearts that shapes everything else in our life.
- The default mode of the human heart is self-seeking.
- Sin is a sickness...a self-obsessed root that has grown into every one of our hearts.

**Apart from Jesus, we all want to do what is wrong, and we are faced with intense selfish, self-focused, self-exalting, self-benefitting, self-preserving thoughts and desires!**

And we are BORN this way...

**Romans 5:12, 19 (CSB)**

**12. Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned**

**19. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.**

This is the doctrine of Original Sin.

- The only people who think kids are innocent are people who don't have kids!

**1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**

**2. Apart from Jesus we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**

**3. Apart from Jesus we are deceived by the Devil**

**4. We are born with a sinful condition.**

**5. Apart from Christ we are slaves to bodily desires.**

**Ephesians 2:3 (NIV)**

**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.**

The *craving of our flesh* are wide-ranging and wildly influential...

- **Lust—Sexual craving.**
- **Anger—rage.**
- **Disgust.**
- **Envy—jealousy.**
- **Selfish ambition.**

The word used here in the Greek is a word that means, "*passionately longing, craving and lusting for something*".

- **Because of our sin, our behavior is addictive—we CRAVE it.**

*In our sinful condition apart from Jesus, we long for things that are destructive to others and even self-destructive.*

- We don't simply choose to satisfy these cravings, we are SLAVES to these desires and thoughts.

**Romans 6:19 (NLT)**

**... Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin.**

- **Apart from God we are DEAD SLAVES.**

**1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**

**2. Apart from Jesus we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**

**3. Apart from Jesus we are deceived by the Devil**

**4. We are born with a sinful condition.**

**5. Apart from Jesus we are slaves to bodily desires.**

**6. Apart from Christ we are Skewed in our thinking.**

**Ephesians 2:3 (NIV)**

**All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts.**

- In our flesh we do not see the full picture of Jesus and His love and our new life in Him...
- But what we do see apart from God, we skew in our mind in order to justify the cravings and desires we have.

**Our sin doesn't just affect what we believe, our sin also affects what we are motivated by.**

- Insecurity, fear, jealousy, pride...
- ***Our deadness and worldliness and slavery to sin causes us to not think right...***

**In order to see a clearer picture of our heart apart from God , we need to look at what motivates us.**

- Because even when we do something good, often it is tainted by bad motivations...

**Our sin goes even deeper than we might be afraid to admit...**

- 1. Apart from Jesus we are spiritually dead.**
- 2. Apart from Jesus we are conformed to the patterns of the world.**
- 3. Apart from Jesus we are deceived by the Devil**
- 4. We are born with a sinful condition.**
- 5. Apart from Jesus we are slaves to bodily desires.**
- 6. Apart from Jesus we are Skewed in our thinking.**

**7. Apart from Jesus we are under the judgment and wrath of God.**

**Ephesians 2:3b (NIV)**

**[...] Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.**

- **Sin is not just making a mistake here and there...Sin is an offense to God.**
- God is holy and just, and he will not—He CAN NOT tolerate injustice.

This is a GOOD thing!

- Who would trust a God who would smile and ignore wickedness?
- Who would want to know a God who is indifferent to offenses against Himself and His people?
- God wouldn't be good if He tolerated injustice and evil and crimes against children and humanity?

**We want a JUST God!**

**God is always just and God is always holy, and His just and holy response to sin is judgment.**

- God is a good judge.
- He is a righteous judge.
- He is an impartial judge.

**He is a judge who should be CELEBRATED and PRAISED for His fairness and justice!**

*While it is GOOD that he is a good judge, that means that apart from Jesus we are in a bad spot...*

- ***We are spiritually dead.***
- ***We are forever separated from God.***

We cannot truly justify ourself by comparing ourself to someone else.

Scripture reminds us from beginning to end that we've all sinned and have all fallen short of the glory of God.

**Romans 3:23 (CSB)— For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.**

Some people claim to be “more POSITIVE”—“**I think people are mostly good...**” Really?

- Then why did you lock your house when you came to church?
- Why did you set the alarm on your car?
- That's why we have a hard time trusting people...
- We all eventually learn that people have the tendency to hurt us.

**Others are RELATIVISTIC**—meaning that they believe in moral relativism.

- That PEOPLE are responsible for defining ethical truths.
- They might say, “right and wrong is in the eye of the beholder”...
  - What’s right for me may not be right for you...
  - What’s wrong for you may not be what’s wrong for me...

If you have been tempted by this reasoning, you need to remember to step back and look at where that will lead you...

- Following this reasoning, we lose the ability to enforce any parameters on justice or decency in society.

**Following this reasoning actually enables and empowers injustice in the world!**

The world is BROKEN.

**To not acknowledge the brokenness of the world is both contrary to scripture and it is naive to the reality of all of history.**

- There are some good moments, but scattered amongst the brokenness of humanity’s story apart from God.

This may seem harsh...but it is true.

**When someone is very sick, the only right response is to properly diagnose the condition!**

- **That’s the only way to rightly treat it!**
  - Not telling sick people that they are sick because we’re afraid of being “hurtful” is NOT kind of us or helpful or loving...
  - Not telling someone that they are very ill would be cruel and unloving and wicked!

**God loves us and so He shows us our spiritual sickness so that He can offer us the remedy!**

So apart from Jesus we are:

- **spiritually dead**
- **conformed to the patterns of the world**
- **deceived by the Devil**
- **born with a sinful condition**
- **we are slaves to bodily desires**
- **Skewed in our thinking.**
- **And apart from Jesus we are under the judgment and wrath of God.**

On our own we are hopeless...helpless...

**On our own we are DEAD DEAD.**

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**We’ve taken an honest look at our sinful condition, it is worse than we might have thought...**

The next part of our passage reveals that our sin and deadness is not the end of this story!

- **After giving us this DEVASTATING diagnosis that we are dead in our sins, Paul goes on in verse 4 to say, “BUT GOD... BUT GOD!!”**

We can’t enter the Kingdom of God as a dead person...and God does NOT want to leave us dead in a grave!

- God sent His son to live perfectly and then pay the penalty for our sins by dying on a criminal’s cross.
  - Jesus defeated the power of sin to separate us from God by paying our penalty for our sin!
- THEN, God HIMSELF was placed as a lifeless corpse—a DEAD MAN—into a grave AND DEFEATED IT!
- God no goes INTO the graves of our lives to rescue us while we were DEAD in our sin...
- **God has been where you are—He went there to save you!**
- **God MEETS US right where we are—He is pursuing us—longing to exchange our dead lives for NEW LIFE!**

This is the GOOD NEWS—the GOSPEL—that we can be born again in Jesus!

- ONLY Jesus can bring the dead back to life!
- ONLY Jesus can offer true forgiveness of our sins.
- ONLY Jesus can set us free from slavery to sin.
- ONLY Jesus can breathe LIFE into spiritually dead lives...

**So while the diagnosis of sin and death is worse than we imagined...It is also true that scripture reveals God’s REMEDY to be MUCH BETTER than we could ever hope or imagine!**

- If you are in Christ, REJOICE in your salvation!
- If you find yourself DEAD, IN A GRAVE... come to Jesus!