

The Five Fold Fallenness of Man - Part 1

by Tim Conway

The sermon emphasizes the five-fold fallenness of man, highlighting our spiritual death and inability to respond to God without His intervention.

Duration: 46:26

Scripture: Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:23, Romans 5:8, Romans 5:12, Ephesians 2:1-3, Colossians 2:13

Topics: "Human Depravity", "Redemptive Salvation"

Description

This sermon delves into the deep concept of the fallenness of man, exploring the five-fold aspects of human depravity as outlined in Ephesians 2:1-3. It emphasizes the universal brokenness and sinfulness of humanity, highlighting the inherent rebellion against God and the desperate need for His power and salvation. The message challenges listeners to confront the reality of their own sinfulness and the magnitude of God's redemptive work in transforming lives from darkness to light.

Transcript

Ephesians 2 verses 1-3, we are still here, we were here last week, be here today, likely be here next week as well. Ephesians 2, 1-3, I'll just tell you right up front, the title of my message is how dead is dead, the five-fold fallenness of man. Ephesians 2, 1-3, and you were dead in the trespasses and sins.

By the way, just a reminder, New King James, King James, you'll see that those first words that you have in your Bibles are in italics, added, brought up by Tyndale apparently from verse 5. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world. Now think with me here, brethren, the five-fold fallenness of man. I didn't just make that up.

How dead is dead? Well, here at the beginning, you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, you're that dead. Following the course of the world, you're that dead. There's deadness with regards to the world.

Following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience, you're that dead. When it comes to the devil, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, you're that dead. When it comes to the flesh, and we're by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind, you're that dead.

When it comes to your relationship to God, you're under His wrath. How dead is dead? The five-fold fallenness of man. I'm going to tell you, I'm only going to get to the first of the five today.

Brethren, remember where we're coming from. Remember in the original, no chapter division. Remember when you go back, what was Paul praying? Paul was praying that you might have the eyes of your understanding enlightened, or the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you might know.

Paul wants us to know certain things. We need to know, brethren, what we know has to do with how we live. What you know, what you believe, is everything about the Christian life.

You need to know some things. If you're going to live right, you need to know some things. If you're going to think right, you need to know some things.

If you're going to believe right, you need to know some things. Paul wants us to know something. And you know where we were coming from.

Something about the immeasurable or the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us who believe. And he says, okay, let me show you about this power. Look at the resurrection of Christ, and look at the glorification of Christ, the exaltation of Christ.

The power at work there is the same power that is at work within you. But, Paul isn't done arguing his point. He says, I know, a good healthy look at their native depravity.

That ought to help them come to grips with the power that's at work here. That ought to help them get a good healthy look at this power of God. I'll have them consider what they were before God went to work in their lives.

Because, brethren, that has a lot to do, that says a lot about the power of God and how great that power is if you look at the wreckage and the carnage that God was confronted with. Now, brethren, is it not true? Is it not true that man constantly underestimates what salvation is all about? Constantly underestimate. They don't comprehend what is involved in making somebody into a Christian.

People have this idea that, you know, in and of ourselves, we're pretty much on our way to heaven. I mean, basically, at heart, we're pretty good people. People just don't understand what God is confronted with, what He's faced with when it comes to the wreckage of mankind.

And so, you know what, because we don't understand, I'm talking about the average Joe out there, the average guy on the street. You talk to the average guy out there, and what do you find? I mean, look, any of you that have watched the Ray Comfort videos, even when they go into a major prison, maybe you've seen the one, he goes into this prison where you've got all these felons, and he interviews these guys, and he asks them the same question, prisoner after prisoner, inmate after inmate, felon after felon, and they say, you know, I know I've done some bad things, but at heart, yes, I believe I'm basically a good person. And that is, look, that is a mindset that permeates mankind.

A man's general opinion about himself is basically a pretty good one. A general opinion, basically good. And you know what? You start talking about Jesus Christ, and God giving Him to die for sinners, it doesn't amaze and awe man very much.

Why? Because it's not seen as that big a deal. You know why? Men basically have a pretty high estimation of themselves. And they love themselves.

And so to hear that God loves them falls right in line with that. And to hear that God loves them so much, it's not that big a deal. Man's general opinion of himself is you know as well as I do.

Interview the crowds. What do they say? You ask them, are you going to heaven? Yeah, I'm going to heaven. Why? You know what their answer is not? Because Jesus Christ came and He died on the cross, a substitutionary atonement in my place, poured out His blood, took the wrath of God.

He suffered a penal suffering. A penal punishment because of what my sins deserved. You know that's not what they say.

So why did Christ have to come and die? You basically think you're a pretty good person. See, it doesn't compute. It basically is just seen as a gesture of a God that loves them so much because they love themselves so much.

And it's just expected. Well, of course He would die for me. Of course He would.

So it doesn't become that big of a deal. Just a nice gesture on God's part towards good people. The truth is the human race basically give it an opportunity to create a religion and what does it look like? It always looks like man saving himself.

You know why? Because man thinks he can save himself. That man that says he thinks he's basically a good person is a man who isn't saying exactly these words, but you can tell it's what he believes. He is basically saying, I believe I can get to heaven by the way I live my life.

And I haven't done that much that's that bad that I ought to go to hell. I basically am a good person at heart. I basically believe I can get to heaven on my own efforts.

That's what he's saying. You know that's what he's saying. And when men say that, what does it do? What perception do they have of the power of God involved in the rescuing and the salvation of sinners? Basically, if they don't see their own sin is a big deal, if they basically see themselves as a pretty good person, then what they're doing is massively underestimating the power of God that's involved in making a sinner into a saint.

But here's the thing. We might say, well, yeah, the average guy out there thinks that. The average guy out there has a wrong opinion.

But the thing that I want to remind you is this. Paul isn't talking to the average guy out there. He's talking to us.

He's talking to Christians. And you ought to just contemplate that. He's writing to Christians.

It's Christians he's taking by the hand and leading down the streets of the depravity of man. It's us. We're the ones that he wants to grip with the desperate condition of mankind.

What's the deal, Paul? Why? Why do we Christians need to know this? I mean, after all, we think and you were dead. You know what he's doing? He's telling you about you. You ever let that sink in? He's not telling you just about everybody.

He's telling you about you. You say, Paul, hold on. I was there.

I had a front row seat. You don't need to tell me about me. And Paul would say, no, I beg to differ.

I do need to tell you about you. You see, that's what's happening here. But brethren, the thing is, we were there.

We know how we were when we were lost. Why do we need Paul to come along and tell us? Isn't he just wasting his breath or his ink? Isn't the Spirit of God who's moving upon Paul just wasting our time here? And I would say this, think with me. One thing's for certain, that when we were lost, we didn't understand any of this.

Now I know he's not writing to the Ephesians while they're lost, but you could say, hey, I had a front row seat. I know how it was. But just let me remind you that when you were actually in that front row seat and you were back there like that, dead in your trespasses and sins, you didn't realize it.

You were blind as a bat. That's bad. Bats probably aren't blind, but we couldn't see too well.

Because I'll tell you this, when I was lost, if somebody would have come to me and said, you are dead in your trespasses and sins, and you know what? The devil is at work in you. And you know what? You're a child of wrath. Nothing but God's wrath towards you.

Would you have believed that? No, because you would have been right there with the average Joe on the street who said, at heart, I'm basically a pretty good person. Yeah, I'm a sinner. Yeah, I know I've done some things that I shouldn't have done.

But you know, basically, I'm a pretty good person. See, you would have said that. And so, when the person comes along and says to you, begins quoting Scripture and begins telling you about the biblical doctrine of sin, you would have recoiled at it.

You would have bristled at it. Just like the people you talk to now. And you know this.

You get saved. You go to your family. You go to your friends.

You go to your schoolmates. Because that's what I did. I know many of you, you've done that.

You begin to tell them about this doctrine of the depravity of man and the biblical doctrine of sin. And what happens? Well, they recoil and they bristle. And that's what we did when we were lost.

So we know we didn't have a good grasp of it then. But you say, yeah, but he's not talking to the Ephesians when they're lost. He's talking to them when they're saved.

So why does he need to do that? Let me just remind you of something. I was sitting there thinking about that. It's like three things came to my mind.

Three things that I've just experienced just recently that show me that even saved, there is an aversion to really grasping the reality of this. You say, what do you mean? I have no aversion to it. I dot the dot and cross the T and I'm right there with Calvinism.

I believe in total depravity. My tulip starts with a T. I know it. I affirm it.

Okay. Let me tell you, generally speaking perhaps, it's always easy to look somewhere else and say, oh yeah, they're totally depraved. We can point, but you remember this.

You were dead in your trespasses and sins. He's speaking to you. This is about you.

I sat with a brother this week. Listen, I know this brother's not here today, so don't worry that he may be sitting here. But even if he hears this, no worry, because this describes all of us.

I was sitting with a brother this week and he felt like he wanted to meet with me and confess certain sins, something that's been going on in his life. And I was asking him different questions about things and there came a point when he was going to confess Well, he was. He was confessing a certain sin that he has been guilty of.

And as he was telling me, he told me, well, I did this a couple of times. And then he caught himself. And he said, well, several times.

Kind of his voice dropped off. At first it was a couple times. But he caught himself right away because he recognized that what he was saying wasn't true.

And so now with a little bit softer voice, it was, well, actually more than that. What goes on in us when our first response, when it comes to our own sin, is to defend ourselves? To put ourselves in the best possible light? What happens? What's that protective? Listen, we love to posture ourselves. We love to protect ourselves.

We don't like to admit the fullness, even of our sin right now, when we become Christians. Let alone do we really admit to what we were when we were lost. I'll tell you this, to articulate your doctrine of total depravity is one thing.

But when somebody comes and says, I know you when you were lost. Chronic liar. A whore.

You're a filthy sinner. It's like, whoa. Paul is talking about you.

And there is, even in us as a Christian, there is a tendency. We are massively proficient in defending ourselves rather than condemning and accusing ourselves, even as Christians. Then something else came to my mind.

I think about this. It again tells me we really don't understand the brokenness. We really don't understand the wretchedness of the pit that we came from.

It's got to do with this. We recoil when we hear about rape, murder, kidnapping, fill in the blank. Do you know what's interesting? We don't recoil with the same horror when we see a Muslim and we know they're worshipping Allah and Muhammad.

Or we see a Catholic and we know that they worship Mary. You know what's interesting to me? When you go through your Old Testament and you come to the worship of Molech, you know when God talks about taking a child and setting it on the glowing hot arms of their idol and that child being roasted alive, God doesn't use horrific, appalling language. He just simply says they gave their child to Molech.

No description at all. But you know when God talks about His people worshipping Molech, God says you're a whore. God says it's an abomination.

What am I getting at? I'll tell you what I'm getting at. We like to go down line those Ten Commandments. Dive in at 6 and 7. We forget number 1 and number 2 came quite a ways before that.

But you see, we minimize. My point is this reflects back to what we're dealing with here. Because we don't really grasp the horrific wickedness towards God and the things we did towards God and how we related to God and how we were alienated to God and how we sinned against Him.

We measure our sins based on largely how they are received or how they impact or affect other people. We miss. We miss some of the sinister, the darkness that came in the way that we related to God Himself.

We still don't get it. We still tend to be appalled at the murder of a child far more than that somebody would bow down before Mary. And it's just true, brethren.

There is a native, fibrous root of man-centeredness that still needs to be washed and it needs to be purged and really coming to recognize what we were. We still don't fully comprehend the ugliness and the fallenness and the depravity of this pit. Let me go further.

Yesterday in the homiletics class, we talked about preaching and prayer. Homiletics. We're talking about preparing sermons.

But I have been laying down some preliminary and some foundational aspects of getting to the place where we actually prepare a sermon and deliver a sermon. And I wanted to talk about prayer. And I quoted a missionary that many of us are well aware of and know about who has preached in this church, who has traveled all over the world and dealt with many men in many different places who handle the Word of God.

And he said there are prayerless preachers all over the place. And it made me think, if there are prayerless preachers, how many of us in this room would have to raise our hand and say our prayer lives could be characterized somewhat right now as cold or calloused or indifferent. What am I getting at? Just this.

Brethren, desperate people pray. People who perceive how broken they are unless God helps them. It reflects right back on this text.

You can say, I understand the doctrine of total depravity. And you walk out these doors and you don't pray more than you do. You see, there's a disconnect.

Because what you're really saying is I don't think I need the power of God. I don't think man without God is so broken. We have this fibrous root of independence, brethren, that pulses, that sucks nutrients, that lives and that needs to die.

We might call it the flesh. We might call it whatever. But we have to recognize there is a reason why we need to be confronted with how dead man is without God.

Because even as Christians, we need the eyes of our understanding really open to it. Brethren, do you realize how wrecked, how empty, and how dead we are without God? Do you recognize it? Do you grasp it? Paul seems to think we need this. So, the five-fold fallenness of man.

How dead is dead? Well, let's look. Dead with respect to sin. Dead with respect to the world.

Dead with respect to the devil. Dead with respect to the flesh. Dead with respect to God today.

Let's think about trespasses and sins. Dead in trespasses and sins. And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked.

The first thing is, even though he's talking about you, you, you, this is how you were if you're a Christian, if you're not a Christian, this is how you are. But at various places through these three verses, he hits on the universal-ness, if I can say it that way, of this. It's us.

It's personal. It's everybody. There's no exceptions.

Everybody is broken this way. And if it really starts to hit you, there's not a lot of Christians in this world. And when you look out across the landscape of our city, our state, our nation, our world, everybody is like this.

You know the amazing thing is that we don't all rise up and kill each other in a day. God restrains. Thank the Lord that He does.

But just notice, just notice v. 3. "...Among whom..." Who's he talking about? The sons of disobedience. What's the deal with them? Well, namely this. The prince of the power of the air.

We're talking about Satan, the devil, the dragon, that old snake, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. "...Among whom we all once lived..." Now that might be we all Christians, but every single Christian. You once lived in this state, in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, whereby nature, children of wrath, like the rest.

All the others. The rest of mankind. It's universal.

It's all of us. There are none not included in this description with one exception. Those who were like this, but aren't anymore because they've experienced the mighty salvation of God and are no longer like this.

All start like this. They stay like this unless God intervenes. Here's the second thing.

There are places in Scripture where we can talk imputed sin. We have a connection with Adam. It's true.

Paul really unfolds this in Romans 5. Verses 12 and following. That's not what Paul has in mind here. Nothing about this is imputed.

He's not talking about some state of legal condemnation that we're under due to Adam's sin being imputed to us. He is very, very specifically talking about inherent sin. Our actual sins that you committed.

You were dead in trespasses and sins in which you once walked. They're yours. They're specifically yours.

You can see this three ways. One, when you go over to Romans 5 and you see when it talks about the imputed sin, this federal headship of Adam, it speaks about his trespass singular. It's got to do with the fruit.

Here it's plural. Not talking about Adam's. It's talking about your plural.

Also, by the way, I mentioned this last week, in the original, this literally reads you were dead in the trespasses and the sins yours. They're yours. And then if you have any doubts beyond that, you can go to

verse 2 here in chapter 2 and you see you walked in them.

Paul specifically states that the trespasses and sins he's talking about are the ones we actually walked in. Paul totally has in mind our individual wretched state. And the thing about it is, now, he doesn't just give us one word.

You know, it might have been satisfactory for him just to say trespasses. Repetition. Trespasses and sins.

Not enough just to say one. Must be dead in trespasses and sins. Paul gives a slightly different and rather graphic variation to the Colossians.

Just listen. Listen to how he says this. Colossians 2.13 And you who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh.

Again, not enough just to say dead in your trespasses. Just stop. This is you.

The uncircumcision of your flesh. You start to think about that. The uncircumcision of your flesh.

You say, well, I don't want to stay there and think too long. I get these images, they're pretty graphic. Well, you know what? He intended you to have those.

He doesn't intend you just to pass over this and forget it and deal with it lightly. He intends you to recognize what he's saying. Is it graphic? Yes.

Yes. Brethren, what we were if we are now Christians was embarrassing. So let's think.

Definition. What is a trespass? I grew up hunting. I grew up in the fields and in the woods.

I grew up riding dirt bikes and snowmobiles. I saw a lot of no trespassing signs. A farmer doesn't want you to go on his property.

No trespassing. The idea connected with this word trespass is a false step. We think of no trespassing.

It means probably the farmer has a fence or a tree line or something. This is my property line. This is the boundary.

Don't misstep. Don't step from where you are where you can read this sign over beyond the boundary. That's the idea.

Trespass is what a person does who transgresses the will of God. The law of God. It's a false step.

Two English words that typically come forth from this Greek word trespass. Transgress. They both carry the idea of stepping over the line.

Crossing over. Here you have think, think, think. We have the Almighty.

His ways are perfect. His laws, they are holy. They are good.

There is no imperfection. There is no blemish. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God.

He says here's a line. Here's all that is righteous and all that's beautiful. We just ignore it.

We step over. We cross over. He draws the line.

It says do not step over. And we ignore Him and we step over. He says don't eat the fruit.

And we ignore it and we eat the fruit. He says don't eat the fruit. We ignore it.

He says don't eat the fruit. We eat it. He says eat that fruit.

We don't eat that fruit. He says do this. Honor your parents.

We don't do it. He says don't do that. Don't commit adultery.

We do it. We do it in our minds or actually. He says do this.

We don't do it. He's drawing these lines all over the place and every single line that He draws, over it we go. Don't eat.

We do. It's exactly what we do. Paul says you didn't just do that once in a while.

You walked that way. Do you recognize what we're talking about? You get up in the morning. You stepped over the line.

Unacceptable. God said filthy. It's no good.

We did the next thing. God said not acceptable. We stepped over the line.

On and on and on. There's no exception. It's not like we have this little, this is basically our life over here that is generally good and once in a while we step outside of there and once in a while we step over the line.

That's how people recognize themselves. That's not what Paul's saying. Paul is saying you walked on the wrong side of the line.

Every single step you took is on the wrong side of the line. All the time, the whole life is spent over the line. You've done nothing but tread on the forbidden ground when you were dead in your trespasses and sins.

We walk that way. The second word is sins. And you know, maybe you've heard it before, the idea of missing the mark.

It's a departure from what's right. It's a failing to hit the target. And obviously the classic text that displays this for us is found there in Romans 3.22. There is no distinction.

In other words, there's no distinction between any people, Jew or Gentile. No distinction. There's no exception.

There's no difference. All men are the same. And how are they? All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Here you have the glory of God. The beauty of God. Everything about the character of God.

Pristine attributes. The perfect being. His holy character.

And we miss it. You don't just miss it. We fall short.

Not just a little. Not just once in a while. We're dead on the other side of the line.

We constantly pick up our moral bow and arrow. Pull. Shoot.

And not only miss, it falls short. And it doesn't just fall short. As though we're aiming towards that target and our arrow just doesn't get there.

Scripture said, all have turned aside. Turned. None seek after God.

We're not even aiming the right way. We've turned. The target's over there.

And we just keep shooting this. We aim the opposite way. Scripture says, we've already charged it all.

Both Jews and Greeks are under sin as it is written. None is righteous. No, not one.

No one understands. No one seeks for God. All have turned aside.

Not even facing the right way. Together they have become worthless. Man is worthless.

Worthless. Do you recognize that everything you did from the point you were conceived until that day God saved you? Worthless. Utterly worthless.

Hell deserving. Rebellious. Missed the mark.

Shooting the wrong way. We have no inclination to hit that mark. None whatsoever.

Brethren, what Scripture says, you know the text well over from Isaiah 64, that all our righteous deeds are as a filthy rag. A polluted garment. Menstrual cloth.

Again, you say, oh, that's being too graphic. No, see, we don't really get it. When you were lost, you got up in the morning, first thought you had in your mind, God said, filth.

Filth. I can't tolerate that. I can't fellowship with that.

The second thought you had, the first word that came out of your mouth, it's all bad. It all hit the mark. See, we say, well, we weren't raping and killing.

That just shows how backward our thinking was. Brethren, the darkness about man is when you polish him up and you pull him out where he's not killing and he's not raping. What's happening? He is falling short all the time.

You look at what he does with his life. Why isn't God on every single one of the billboards out here? Why isn't God in every magazine? Why isn't He on every TV screen? Why isn't something about Him not in every movie? Why? Why, brethren? Why is He left out? Why? Why has every man-made religion got to do with exalting man and just making a little God and dragging His honor through the mud? Why? Because that is man. And that is us.

And this is how broken, and this is the carnage, and this is the wreckage, and this is what Paul wants us to see. That God is looking even when we polish ourselves up. And we're going to go to church.

And we're going to try to do some good. And we're going to give our money to United Way. And we're going to give it to UNICEF.

And we're going to do these things and pull our tie up straight because we're not like these people and we're not like those people. And God looks at it and says, this is the best efforts that you make at righteousness. I cannot stand them.

It's like a polluted, filthy, filthy rag. Away with it. It is unacceptable.

And brethren, the thing that we have to come back to all the time is this is the best that we try to do. And it isn't just that God sees this once in a while. This is how we walk.

This describes our life. This describes every single thing we did. Everything we thought.

Everything we said. It is that broken. Man is that wrecked.

We simply will not understand man and understand life in this world. And we will not understand the power of God necessary in salvation until we properly understand this biblical doctrine of sin. And you go to Scripture and you find we're not surprised that these little children need to have their sin bridled in.

Why? We're brought forth in iniquity. We are conceived in sin. Conceived.

Do you recognize that? The children aren't innocent. That's not cute. They are products of the wreckage of humanity.

They are products of the fallenness of Adam. And that sin will come to maturity and they will go to hell. And God will punish them forever for their crimes that He has been insulted with.

That they commit. It is not cute. There is no good.

There is none that does good. Not even the cute child from the womb. Estranged from the womb Scripture says.

We go astray from birth speaking lies. And you see, the thing was, when we were lost, many of us, we didn't know Scriptures. We never heard anything like this.

But even as Christians, we need to be brought back. Brethren, do you recognize how badly we need the power of God? Do you recognize what you are without Him? Do you recognize what you were? Do you recognize what sort of power we're talking about that can take this material? Brethren, it's one thing for God to say let there be light when there was nothing. Creating something out of nothing.

But to create something good, something that can stand in the presence of God holy and blameless before Him, when we used to be this, what sort of power does it take to do that? That's what we're dealing with here. We're dealing with man, even when he's not killing. Which he does a lot of.

Man's hands are red with blood. But even when you polish him up and you take him off the killing fields, he's not raping, he's not pillaging. He just leaves God out of everything.

We read in Scripture about the broken cisterns. And look, the thing is it's not just that man resorts to broken cisterns. He does nothing but resort to broken cisterns.

Everything when you were lost that you fought, everything you did, everything you were striving after, broken, broken, broken. And the end is hell and despair and misery and tears and wailing and gnashing of teeth. All of it.

And we deserve that because it's that wretched, it's that defiling, and it's that dishonoring to God. We need to recognize why did the second Person of the Godhead have to come to this earth and become a baby? Why the Incarnation? Why did He have to go to Jerusalem and give His life on that cross? Substitutionary atonement. And we don't really grasp what that means as long as we just have these light and flippant views of the doctrine of sin.

But when you begin to recognize we are helpless. We are useless. We are broken to the uttermost.

We needed One to come and stand in our place and come under the law and keep that law and uphold that law. And we didn't want to go to that cross and endure the wrath of God for us and suffer the penal punishment that we deserved and stand in our place. Substitution, brethren! You see, what was done on that cross, we cannot understand until we start to understand what sin is all about.

What trespasses and sins and being dead in them. What did it take? What sort of power must be unleashed for God? What was God confronted with when He came to us? For Him to devise a way to restore us, to renew us, to make us into perfect images of Christ so that we might dwell with Him, so that we might actually be the building blocks of the temple. For God to draw near and dwell among us, to dwell in our midst.

For us to be a priesthood that can now approach to Him and actually offer something through Christ. And God looks at it and says, well done. That takes such power as this world does not know.

And sadly, we Christians forget and are slow to grasp. All glory be to God. Amen.

You're dismissed.

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