

Christian Essentials: Fallen Humanity

**Genesis 3:1-24
Ephesians 2:1-9**

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So... What happened?

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit from the forbidden tree, what happened?

Verse 7 gives us a hint.

The eyes of both of them were opened and they saw...

But, hey, is that **all**?

Nothing more?

Those of you who know the story may well remember God's statement to our first human parents about that tree, in Genesis 2, forbidding them to eat from it-

"In the day that you eat of it,

...remember the rest?

...you shall die." (Gen 2:17)

Pardon me, but when I read Genesis 3, doesn't seem like anyone keels over.

So... what happened?

Did God lie when he said this?

"Their eyes were opened."

Subsequent verses tell us that they ran and hid.

It seems very much as if they continued to live, east of Eden.

Not in the garden, but they continued to live.

Didn't they?

Ephesians 2:1 and 2:5 give us a clue.

They describe the life of believers in the time before coming to faith.

In both verses it describes the condition of these breathing, walking, talking, active people - their condition before faith in Jesus.

"You were dead..." says verse 1.

"We were dead..." says verse 5.

Even with blood pulsing through our veins - dead.

Without Jesus - dead.

Dead -

We too quickly think of death as the body being inanimate.

Life ceasing in the body.

And, yes, that is a form of death. The life is taken out of the body.

But that is only one form of death - body separated from life.

When we speak of death, think of the word **separation**.

The death of a marriage is when two people joined by a covenant become separated from each other. What was together is ripped apart, just like a soul being ripped out of a body. Death.

Dead -

there is another form of death, worse yet than the body stopping.

It is the death of the soul.

It is when a soul that was made to be in covenant communion with the Creator is ripped away from that communion, separated from the Creator.

That is death in its most awful form.

It is no longer life - bare and bleak existence, at best.

But not life.

“In the day you eat of it, you shall die.”

On that terrible day in the garden, Adam and Eve **did** die.

And the human race died with them.

Oh, children were born and raised for thousands of years since then.

But it has been in a state of walking death.

It is existence...

...but not life.

More than just dead-end living, it is the essence of death.

It is the worst possible death.

It is existence apart from God.

It's what God gave as warning to Adam and Eve.

It's the terrible reality that humanity has lived with ever since that day.

It's not just Adam and Eve.

It is, says Ephesians 2,

YOU.

The finger is being pointed right at us.

All human beings - dead.

It picks up a dark statement made four books and some pages earlier, in Romans 3:23 -

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God....”

Sinned - missed the mark, below the standard which God created us for.

Fall short - we're not there; sin has ripped us away from the glory of God.

And being separated from it, we are as good as dead.
No, worse than that.
We **are** dead.

Totally dead.

The Calvinist word for that is **totally depraved**, and is taught in the third head of doctrine of the Canons of Dort.

Total Depravity - the biblical teaching about Fallen Humanity.

Some of you probably grew up being taught the five points of Calvinism under the acronym T.U.L.I.P. -

Total depravity
Unconditional election
Limited atonement
Irresistible grace
Perseverance of the saints

Jim Osterhouse in his book *Faith Unfolded* suggests a new acronym to teach the same five truths - F.A.I.T.H. -

Fallen humanity
Adopted by God
Intentional Atonement
Transformed by the Holy Spirit
Held by God

We'll work through each of these over the coming weeks.

Beginning here, with Fallen Humanity, the death of humanity,
totally.

Separated from God.
Caught, trapped in God-less living.
Which is depravity.
Totally.

And not just humanity.
But creation right along with them.
That's the terrible tragedy of the words God spoke to Adam.
Thorns and thistles.
Sweat, drought.
Pain, sickness.

All of creation is caught -
Short of the glory of God.
Trapped in death.

There is no way around this teaching.
No way to soften it.
Blunt.
Hard.
Painful.
Tragic.

All fall short: Robert Picton
 The thief in Kingston pen
 The abusive employer
 You
 And me

And there is no way any of us, no matter how hard we try, can cross the gap of sin, that great and awful divide, and reach God.

Someone once said that whether you stand at the bottom of a mineshaft or on top of Mt. Everest, you are equally incapable of touching a star. It remains totally out of reach.

Whether you live a morally high life, from a human point of view, or a lowly one filled with atrocities, the reality is that all humans are equally incapable of touching the glory of heaven. It remains totally out of reach.

Total depravity.
Fallen humanity.
All of us.

Dead people remain that -
- dead.

They can't bring themselves to life.
They can't help themselves.

Thanks be to God that Ephesians doesn't talk of this tragedy of human death in the present tense.

You noticed that, I hope!
"Once you **WERE** dead," says verse 1.
"We **WERE** dead," says vers 5.

Thanks be to God that *He made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved - and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus...*" (v.5).

What the Creator promised in the midst of the carnage of Genesis 3,
the first glimmerings of gospel hope
when God spoke to the serpent, saying -
*And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your
offspring and hers; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.*

That has come to complete fulfilment in Jesus.
He's paid the debt.
Dealt with the consequences of our failure.
Cleared them out of the way.

Meaning that all who are under His divine wing, in His heavenly camp, allied
with Him, are pronounced righteous.

They are treated by the Father in Heaven as though they never failed.
Forgiven completely.
Loved thoroughly.
Accepted totally.

That is the gospel.
Those without Jesus are totally dead.
Those with Jesus are totally alive.

The contrast is that stark, that severe.
There is no way to ease the tension.
No way to soften the difference.

And it is that deep truth then of Fallen Humanity,
dead forever but brought to life through Jesus,
which makes our next act of worship all the more precious.

The act of gathering at the Lord's Table.
And receiving bread and cup - the body and blood of Christ.
Rescued from death!
Receiving His life.
Precious - oh so

incredibly

precious!!

His coming,
and His victory,
we celebrate tonight.

That death does **NOT** have the last word.
Not over creation.
Not over humanity.
Not over us.

So we share the body and blood of Jesus in the deep mystery of faith.
Taking this ordinary bread and an ordinary cup in obedience to the command
of Jesus to do so,
believing that His Holy Spirit transports this event into holy time and
space and
in some way beyond our ability to understand
connects us with the real body and blood of Jesus
connects us with the forgiving, renewing, restoring power of Jesus
connects us with Jesus Himself
and through Jesus
with the Creator,
our Father in Heaven.

The doctrine of Fallen Humanity, or Total Depravity, shows us the absolute
bottom, the lowest of lows.

But thanks be to God.
Through Jesus we are, in hope and faith and trust,
in very real ways
brought back to joy again.

Join me at the table now.
And let us celebrate - in that hope and faith and trust and joy....
and peace!