

# What Does the Bible Teach About Human Nature?

Ephesians 2:1-9

Eph. 2:1-9 - “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

# What Does the Bible Teach About Human Nature?

- Why is it that everyone sins, except Jesus?
  - Rom. 3:23 - “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”
- A common denominational doctrine is that people are born sinful.

# What Does the Bible Teach About Human Nature?

- The Westminster Confession of Faith states: “Our first parents, being seduced by the subtlety and temptations of Satan, sinned in eating the forbidden fruit. This, their sin, God was pleased, according to his wise and holy counsel, to permit, having purposed to order it to his own glory. By this sin they fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, ***and so became dead in sin, and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body. They being the root of mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed, and the same death in sin and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by original generation. From this original corruption, whereby we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil,*** do proceed all actual transgressions. This corruption of nature, during this life, doth remain in those that are regenerated; and although it be through Christ pardoned and mortified, yet both itself, and all the motions thereof, are truly and properly sin.”

## What Does the Bible Teach About Human Nature?

- Is the doctrine that we are born in and to sin a Biblical teaching, or is it a sectarian, unscriptural exaggeration of the human condition?

# What Is Our Nature?

- The misused proof text is Eph. 2:3. “This text necessarily teaches that ‘By nature, we are made children of wrath’.”
  - Eph. 2:3 - “Among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others”

# What Is Our Nature?

- “Phusis is the Greek word for nature; it can be used both for the natural world as a whole and for the “nature” (i.e., the essential or intrinsic characteristics) of any particular thing, which it has “by nature” (phusei ). We derive our words physics and physical from this word.” (Encyclopedia.com)

# What Is Our Nature?

- Uses of “nature” in scripture:
  - The natural branches - Rom. 11:21
  - Jews by nature (that is by birth) - Gal. 2:15
  - Idols by nature cannot be gods - Gal. 4:8
  - Homosexuality is against nature - Rom. 1:26



# What Is Our Nature?

- The Westminster Confession of Faith states:  
“we are utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite to all good, and wholly inclined to all evil”
- Rom. 2:14-15 - Gentiles did by nature the things in the Law.
- How can Gentiles, who by nature can only do wrong, do what is right?

# What Is Our Nature?

- There is another use of phusis: “That which a person does by ingrained habit, his character, or temperament. Phusis is then used for a man’s character or nature, without reference to his birth or descent, in so far as this is given and not dependent on conscious direction or education.” [Kittle’s Theological Dictionary, IV:253].
- Romans 2:14 and Ephesians 2:3 are examples of this definition. It is based on how we once lived, not how we were born, that we naturally became objects of God’s wrath. It is in the nature of sin to be subject to God’s wrath.

# What Is Our Nature?

- We are born upright
  - Ecc. 7:29 - “Truly, this only I have found: That God made man upright, But they have sought out many schemes.”
- At some point in life, we all choose to sin
  - Rom. 3:23 - “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

# What Is Our Nature?

- We took action to sin. We became sinners, we were not born sinners.
- We sin when we transgress God's law
  - 1John 3:4 - "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness."
- Being born is not a violation of God's law.

# What Is Our Nature?

- If sin is “natural,” then how can scripture say that homosexuality is against nature? - Rom. 1:26-27.
- If sin is “natural,” then how could Gentiles by nature do what was right? - Rom. 2:14

# What Is Our Flesh?

- The Greek word sarx, primarily refers to the physical flesh. By extension, it can refer to the desires that arise from the physical body.
- Lusts come from this world
  - 1John 2:15-17 - “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

# What Is Our Flesh?

- Some advocate that Romans 7:18 teaches that sin is built into our bodies.
  - Rom. 7:18 - “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for the will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.”

# What Is Our Flesh?

- If sin is built into to our flesh, then how did Jesus live without sin?
  - Heb. 4:15 - “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
- Jesus was made like us. He had flesh and blood like us. He was tempted like us. Yet, He committed no sin while in the flesh. So sin isn't naturally in the flesh.



# What Is Our Flesh?

- God did not make flesh sinful; sin does not make flesh sinful; the misuse of the flesh is sinful - Ecc. 7:29
- Paul stated that before knowing the commandments, he was alive - Rom. 7:9-11
- Children have no knowledge of good and evil - Deut. 1:39
- We are not created sinful, and as children we are not born in sin; therefore, sin comes not from the flesh, but from another cause

# What Is Our Flesh?

- Where does sin come from?
  - We are created with healthy desires and instinctive responses to promote and preserve our existence in this world.
  - Satan uses those desires against us by inflating our desires, pressing us toward sin
  - James 1:14-15 - “But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death”

# What Is Our Flesh?

- When Paul said there is nothing good in his flesh, what he is saying is that natural instinct isn't capable of moral choices. Our physical bodies do not know the difference between right and wrong.

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Our minds are different than our flesh. Our minds can judge whether what we desire to do is right or wrong
  - Rom. 7:15-16 - “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. 16 If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.”

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Do we focus our minds on what our flesh desires, which due to the flesh's inability to make moral choices will lead to sin more often as not, or do we focus our minds on what God teaches?
  - Rom. 8:5-8 - “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 7 Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. 8 So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God.”

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Where we focus our minds is our choice
  - Joshua 24:14-15 - “Now therefore, fear the LORD, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the LORD! 15 And if it seems evil to you to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.”
- We are not forced to sin by our internal flesh nor by external circumstances; we choose to do righteousness or sin

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- The world believes that the will is weaker than the flesh. These justifications are offered by the world for allowing the flesh to over-rule the spirit:
  - “I was born this way, so therefore I must live this way.”
  - “My feelings are so strong in this area that they cannot be denied.”
  - “Anyone can do whatever they want, so long as there is consent between adults, and there is no harm done.”
  - “I am free to say whatever I want because I have the right to express my feelings whenever and however I feel moved.”
  - “No one should ever hinder anyone else from pursuing their dreams.”
  - “How can something be wrong if so many people agree that it’s good?”
  - “The greatest way of living is if everyone is free to do whatever makes them happy.”

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- What does God say about the power of the will over the flesh?
  - 1Cor. 3:1-3 - “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. 2 I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; 3 for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?”



# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Gal. 5:16-17 - “I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. 17 For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.”

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Col. 3:5-11 - “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. 8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, 10 and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him, 11 where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

# What Is The Role Of Our Will?

- Col. 3:12-15 - “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; 13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. 14 But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. 15 And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.”

# No One Begins Life In Sin

- To claim that we are born in sin is to say God made us sin
  - James 1:13 - “Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted by God; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.”
- No one is ever forced to sin; in fact, God limits temptation so that our choice remains intact
  - 1Cor. 10:13 - “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

# No One Begins Life In Sin

- We all stumble into sin. But there is a way out
  - 1John 1:8-9 - “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”