


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM



A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's roots are massive and spread out over the ground and the ruins. The background shows more ruins and lush green foliage.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

PRINCIPLES FOR BIBLICAL *EVANGELISM* FOUND IN JOHN 4, “THE WOMAN AT THE WELL.”

TAKE

- TAKE THE INITIATIVE! JN. 4:6-9

OFFER

- OFFER GOD’S MERCY! JN. 4:10-14

IDENTIFY

- IDENTIFY SPIRITUAL NEEDS! JN. 4:9-10

CONFRONT

- CONFRONT SIN JN! 4:16-18

REJECT

- REJECT FALSE WORSHIP! JN. 4:19-24

REVEAL

- REVEAL CHRIST! JN. 4:25-26

SUPPORTING THE *SOVEREIGNTY* OF GOD

1. *AN ETERNAL EXPRESSION* OF LOVE.
2. *ETERNAL* SECURITY.
3. *ELECTION* AND CHRIST.
4. *CONFORMING* TO CHRISTLIKENESS.
5. *CHRIST'S ROLE* IN THE GRACE OF GOD.
6. *FIRST*, THE *BAD* NEWS.
7. THE *ARRAIGNMENT* OF MANKIND
8. THE *INDICTMENT* OF MANKIND

SIN'S CORRUPTION OF OUR **CHARACTER**

WHY **NO** MAN SEEKS AFTER GOD

- **SEEKING GOD** is what *fallen sinners* ought to do, and God has every right to command them to do it. But they don't come. They disobey His commands—as is their common practice. In fact, they can't come, because they love their sin too much. Their attachment to sin amounts to a kind of bondage that would be impossible for them to break free of on their own. Jesus acknowledged this in (JOHN 6:44): **“NO ONE CAN COME TO ME UNLESS THE FATHER WHO SENT ME DRAWS HIM.”** He repeated the point again later in the same chapter: **“NO ONE CAN COME TO ME UNLESS IT HAS BEEN GRANTED HIM FROM THE FATHER.”** (JOHN 6:65).

PAUL clearly explains the problem in detail at the very beginning of his long discourse on sin:

“FOR EVEN THOUGH THEY KNEW GOD, THEY DID NOT HONOR HIM AS GOD OR GIVE THANKS, BUT THEY BECAME FUTILE IN THEIR SPECULATIONS, AND THEIR FOOLISH HEART WAS DARKENED. 22 PROFESSING TO BE WISE, THEY BECAME FOOLS 23 AND EXCHANGED THE GLORY OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE GOD FOR AN IMAGE IN THE FORM OF CORRUPTIBLE MAN AND OF BIRDS AND FOUR-FOOTED ANIMALS AND CRAWLING CREATURES. 24 THEREFORE, GOD GAVE THEM OVER IN THE LUSTS OF THEIR HEARTS TO IMPURITY, SO THAT THEIR BODIES WOULD BE DISHONORED AMONG THEM.

25 *FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE AND WORSHIPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN. 26* *FOR THIS REASON, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO DEGRADING PASSIONS; FOR THEIR WOMEN EXCHANGED THE NATURAL FUNCTION FOR THAT WHICH IS UNNATURAL, 27* *AND IN THE SAME WAY ALSO THE MEN ABANDONED THE NATURAL FUNCTION OF THE WOMAN AND BURNED IN THEIR DESIRE TOWARD ONE ANOTHER, MEN WITH MEN COMMITTING INDECENT ACTS AND RECEIVING IN THEIR OWN PERSONS THE DUE PENALTY OF THEIR ERROR. 28* *AND JUST AS THEY DID NOT SEE FIT TO ACKNOWLEDGE GOD ANY LONGER, GOD GAVE THEM OVER TO A DEPRAVED MIND. (ROMANS 1:21–28)*

They have sinned by **suppressing** basic truths that **they knew** to be true about God's existence and some of His attributes. That willful rejection brought judgment upon them. God gave them over to their own depravity. They are therefore judicially blind, dull of hearing, ignorant of the truth they themselves worked so hard to suppress, and hopelessly enslaved to their own lusts.

- Some take their rebellion further than others, of course. But **PAUL'S** point here is that in our **fallen condition**, **WE ARE ALL GUILTY OF TURNING AWAY FROM GOD**.
- **NO ONE** by his or her own **free will** genuinely adores God and longs for His sovereign majesty to be put on display. Left to ourselves, no one naturally wants to **FEED ON GOD'S WORD**, **LIVE IN HIS PRESENCE**, **OBEY HIS COMMANDS**, **PRAY TO HIM**, **TRUST HIM IN EVERYTHING**, AND **DECLARE HIS PRAISE**.

GIVEN A *FREE AND UNFETTERED CHOICE*, EVERY ONE OF US *HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED* THAT REBELLION AGAINST GOD IS BOUND UP IN OUR HEARTS.

So, ***FALLEN HUMANITY*** is in a desperate condition. No one is righteous. No one understands. And no one seeks God.

(ROM. 3:12), quoting from **(PSA. 14:3)** says: ***“ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE.”*** Or to put it another way, they’ve all gone off the track, no exceptions. They are deviant. The Greek expression is an active verb: ***EK-KLINŌ***, meaning, **“TO DEVIATE,”** or **“TO AVOID.”** This isn’t something that has happened to them; it’s something they have done to themselves. They have diverged from the path of truth. They have fled. It’s a word used in classical Greek to describe deserting soldiers who turned and fled at the height of the battle.

- The whole human race has departed the way of God and deserted the narrow path of truth. ***“ALL OF US LIKE SHEEP HAVE GONE ASTRAY, EACH OF US HAS TURNED TO HIS OWN WAY”*** (ISA. 53:6).
- The next phrase in **(ROM. 3:12)** intensifies the biblical indictment against mankind: ***“TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS.”*** Both **Psalms 14** and **Psalms 53** say, ***“TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME CORRUPT.”*** The same Hebrew word translated ***“CORRUPT”*** is used in both psalms, and it’s a word that would be used of milk that has gone sour.
- It speaks of that which is rancid or tainted. Or it could refer to a foul and festering wound. One possible translation of the word is ***“STINKING.”*** It is the psalmist’s way of signifying ***MORAL CORRUPTION.***

The same word is used in (**JOB. 15:16**), where **ELIPHAZ** describes the human race as ***“DETESTABLE AND CORRUPT, MAN, WHO DRINKS INIQUITY LIKE WATER!”*** **PAUL** translates the thought with a Greek verb that means ***“TO BECOME USELESS.”*** It’s a word used nowhere else in Scripture, but **HOMER** uses it in the **ODYSSEY** to refer to the senseless laughter of a moron. **PAUL’S** statement is in the passive voice (meaning now he is describing something that has happened to humanity rather than something we have done). This is the unplanned-for consequence of humanity’s deliberate rebellion: the human race has been rendered ***“UNPROFITABLE”***—like salt without savor, milk gone bad, or eggs turned rotten.

- So much for the nobility of the human race. **PAUL’S** assessment is decidedly different from that of the typical anthropologist or religious guru.

Still following the line of logic in **Psalms 14** and **53**, he circles back to the start of his indictment against humanity as laid out in **(ROM. 3:10–17)**: ***“THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE”*** (ROM. 3:12). While in **(ROM. 3:10)** **PAUL** conveyed the idea that no one *is* righteous, in **verse 12** his central point is that no one *does* what is moral and right.

- This condemnation on the character of humanity is a sweeping, significant, grave condemnation: ***FALLEN PEOPLE DON'T DO ANYTHING THAT IS GENUINELY GOOD***. The human character, in its fallen state, is ***TOTALLY DEPRAVED***. (That's the common term theologians use to describe this aspect of biblical anthropology.) The point is not that people are as thoroughly evil as they could possibly be. ***RATHER, IT MEANS THAT SIN HAS INFECTED EVERY ASPECT OF THE HUMAN CHARACTER—MIND, WILL, PASSIONS, FLESH, FEELINGS, AND MOTIVES.***

Nothing we do is completely free from the taint of sin. That includes our very best deeds of kindness or altruism.

This is perhaps one of the most difficult of all biblical doctrines for people to receive. We naturally want to think of ourselves as ***fundamentally good, praiseworthy, upright, compassionate, generous, and noble***. Furthermore, Scripture does recognize and describe some astonishing examples of human virtue, like the kindness of the **GOOD SAMARITAN**, or the compassion of **PHARAOH'S DAUGHTER** when she rescued and adopted the infant Moses.

- **GOD GRACIOUSLY RESTRAINS THE FULL EXPRESSION OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY (GEN. 20:6; 31:7; 1 SAM. 25:26; 2 THESS. 2:7)**. The restraint of sin and the mitigation of sin's consequences are expressions of **COMMON GRACE**; the benevolent care God extends to all His creation.

- Quite simply, things are not as bad as they could be in this fallen world because ***“THE LORD IS GOOD TO ALL, AND HIS MERCIES ARE OVER ALL HIS WORKS”*** (PSA. 145:9).

- But again, Scripture also makes abundantly clear that even the best of our good works are not truly good enough to gain any merit with God. “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment” (ISA. 64:6). Even the ***“good”*** things we do actually compound our guilt, because our motives are (at best) mixed with ***selfishness, hypocrisy, pride***, a desire for the ***praise of others***, or a host of other ***evil incentives***. In order to portray ourselves or our works as ***“good,”*** we have to allow for all kinds of leeway in our definition of what is good—and that exercise in and of itself is a diabolical transgression.

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- Much of contemporary culture goes to the extreme of ***“CALL[ING] EVIL GOOD, AND GOOD EVIL.”*** They ***“SUBSTITUTE DARKNESS FOR LIGHT AND LIGHT FOR DARKNESS . . . BITTER FOR SWEET AND SWEET FOR BITTER”*** (ISA. 5:20). But when we understand that God’s own absolute perfection is the only acceptable standard of good (MATT. 5:48), it’s easy to understand why Scripture says, ***“THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”*** And it’s only then that we see our desperate need for a Savior to die on a cross as a substitute in our place.